

ACTION IMAGES



Top two share glory with Ashes winners

STEVE ROWE



THE England women's cricket team stole the show at the 61st SJA British Sports Awards after topping the members poll to decide the Team of the Year.

Captain Charlotte Edwards led her all-conquering team on to the stage at The Brewery to collect the trophy after a year in which they regained their version of the Ashes and won the World Cup and Twenty20 World Cup.

England's men, who regained the Ashes

from Australia, had to be content with second place in the poll.

World heptathlon champion Jessica Ennis was runaway winner of the Sportswoman of the Year title ahead of gymnast Beth Tweddle, while Formula One world champion Jenson Button topped the poll for Sportsman of the Year, beating England cricket captain Andrew Strauss into second place.

IAN COLE

Journalism awards are next in line

WITH the SJA's British Sports Awards safely tucked away for another year, the next important date for your new New Year diaries is the association's British Sports Journalism Awards, which takes place in London on March 8.

The awards are the biggest of their kind, with 26 trophies being handed out to deserved writers, photographers, cartoonists, broadcasters, and their programmes, and colleagues working on the internet for the excellence of their work over 2009.

Entry forms for all categories (except the broadcasting ones, which are voted for by SJA members) are available to download at sportsjournalists.co.uk, where you will also be able to look behind the scenes of the voting with our Frequently Asked Questions section. The closing date is January 8. The shortlists will be published on February 15, with the winners announced at the gala dinner at The Brewery in March.

The judges for this year's awards include 20 current national newspaper, internet, magazine and agency sports editors, plus distinguished former sports editors, as well as leading photographers, cartoonists and colleagues involved in sport from the world of broadcasting.

The main awards, which include sports photographer and writer of the year, news picture and story, and young photographer and young sports writer, the latter for the Ian Wooldridge Trophy, always produce outstanding quality.

This year there are also four new categories. These are best live blog and best regular blog/column in the internet awards, while the broadcasting section has been expanded. Instead of television and radio broadcasters and programmes battling against each other, they have been split to give TV and radio two awards each.

For details of how to book your place at the awards, contact Sandra Phillips at sandra@s2fevents.co.uk, or catch up with our website, sportsjournalists.co.uk.

PETER WILSON



WORLD CHAMPION ENNIS STRONGER THAN EVER

Sportswoman of the Year

JESSICA ENNIS

Presented by Ian McGeechan, coach of the British & Irish Lions rugby team

WHAT a difference a year makes. It was only on a cold day in January this year, as Jessica Ennis ran up a steep hill in a Sheffield park, that her coach Tony Minichiello finally convinced himself that his prodigy was still a prospective Olympic champion in 2012.

"The legs and lungs were okay, still strong," he says, and that was the reassurance he needed. "I had not been 100 per cent certain she would come back. How could I be? The surgeons and physios had said to her: 'You may not come back as good as you are,' so that had always been at the back of my mind."

Roll the calendar forward 12 months and

Ennis is both world heptathlon champion and now also the SJA Sportswoman of the year.

The trauma began for Ennis and coach on June 2 last year when she broke down in the middle of a heptathlon competition in Austria. Two stress fractures in a foot were found and her dream of a 2012 rehearsal in Beijing at the age of 22 was over.

Immediately after her injury, Minichiello posted a motivational message on Ennis's website saying: "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. And, on this occasion, nobody has died."

Six months of worry followed but so complete was the recovery of her form after that January run that in her comeback competition in the same Austrian town one year on she achieved a new career best score for the seven-disciplines of 6,587.

The improvement was all the more remarkable since she was experimenting this

year in long jump by taking off from a different foot at an initial loss of around 50 points.

Bio-mechanical analysis at the English Institute of Sport had suggested that her left had more potential than her right in the long term but, said Minichiello: "It's as awkward initially as a right handed person writing left-handed."

In her year's second competition, the World Athletics Championships in Berlin, she improved massively again to win gold with 6,731 points. Only Denise Lewis among British heptathletes has ever scored more and Ennis is only the sixth British woman to win gold at the championships.

The fears of the surgeon and physios proved unfounded. The hopes of Minichiello for 2012 are still on track. Ennis is a winner, and OUR winner.

NEIL WILSON/*Daily Mail*

Button races from zero to be our hero

ALMOST exactly one year before Jenson Button collected the coveted 2009 SJA Sportsman of the Year award the 29-year-old Formula One star from Somerset was facing potential oblivion from the sport he had graced for a decade.

The Honda team with whom he had raced for the past five years had decided to quit Formula One because of the global economic downturn, leaving the British driver with no car and no chance of joining another team, so late into the pre-season stages with every other seat long taken up.

His only hope was that a buy-out of the Honda team might take place but it appeared to all in F1 that this was, at best, a long shot.

Step forward Ross Brawn, hitherto the mastermind behind Michael Schumacher's title-winning efforts both at Benetton and, especially, at Ferrari. The hugely respected Brawn had been part of the Honda team for the previous year and had decided midway through last season to concentrate on the new regulations and the 2009 car in the knowledge that the 2008 Honda was uncompetitive.

This, so it would transpire, would prove to be a masterstroke but, as Button spent last Christmas receiving texts and emails from his friends telling him where the dole office was, he could not dare to dream that the world title he was so desperate to win, would be less than 10 months away.

His career up to this point had been productive rather than spectacular. After an impressive debut season with Williams in 2000, followed by two less successful years at Benetton, Button joined BAR in 2003 who, in turn, were bought out by Honda.

In 2004 he finished third in the driver's championship and, two years' later, he won his maiden Grand Prix in Hungary but the past couple of years had been barren.

It would all change on March 5 when it was announced that Honda had been bought out by Brawn and the name of the team would subsequently become Brawn Racing.

Button responded by taking pole and then winning the first GP of the season in Australia, before repeating the feat in Malaysia. After a third place in China he rattled up four straight wins in Bahrain, Spain, Monaco and Turkey, by which stage he was streets ahead in the drivers' championship.

It would prove to be his last win of an exciting season in F1 but a series of points finishes, highlighted by his epic drive in Brazil to secure fifth and the title, ensured that Button was a deserving and indeed popular world champion.

Next season he drives for McLaren alongside his new teammate Lewis Hamilton. The last two world champions, and both British, in the same car – it should be something very special.

For now, though, Jenson Button can enjoy being the 2009 SJA Sportsman of the Year.

IAN STAFFORD



ACTION IMAGES



Sports Team of the Year THE ENGLAND WOMEN'S CRICKET TEAM

*Presented by Martin Offiah, former
Great Britain Rugby League
international*

IN a year when both the men's and women's England cricket teams triumphed in their Ashes battles against Australia, SJA members caused something of a surprise by voting Charlotte Edwards and her ladies Team of the Year.

That was recognition for a dedicated group of cricketers who have conquered the world over the past two years, winning the Ashes and then retaining them, and triumphing in the World Cup and Twenty20 World Cup.

In addition England had, in Claire Taylor, the Player of the Series in both the World Cup and

Twenty20 World Cup - performances which gave her the honour of being the first woman to feature in Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year.

Captain Edwards led Taylor and other members of the team on to the stage to collect their award and Edwards said: "We're still pinching ourselves really. It has been such a fantastic year. And now to win this award and to read the names of all the previous winners - it's just unbelievable."

Strauss and his men had to be content with the runners-up position in the poll after regaining the coveted Ashes urn, while the Brawn Formula One team - now you see them, now you don't - were third in their only Formula One season.

Shortly after being declared world champions the Brawn team were taken over by Mercedes-Benz.

IAN COLE



**The Bill McGowran Trophy
(Recognising the Achievements of
an Athlete with a Disability)**

**ELEANOR SIMMONDS and
HILARY LISTER**

*Presented by Dame Tanni Grey-
Thompson, Britain's greatest
Paralympian*

FOR the first time in 46 years this award was shared. The two winners' achievements were poles apart, the only common denominator being water.

Hilary Lister, 37, became the first disabled woman to sail single-handed around Britain, travelling in a clockwise direction from Dover to Dover.

Hilary's disability means she steers her boat by blowing and sucking into tubes.

She shared the award with a 15-year-old swimmer from Swansea who became a familiar face on TV screens during the Beijing Paralympics.

Eleanor Simmonds won gold medals in the 100 and 400m freestyle events in Beijing and continued to rule the world in 2009. At the Paralympic World Cup she set a world record in winning the 100m freestyle gold, she won three titles at the European Championships and in Brazil just a week before our Awards Lunch claimed her first world short-course crown.

Lister was unable to attend the lunch but Simmonds was all smiles as she collected her trophy, saying: "I returned from Brazil to the great news that my school is not expecting me back until tomorrow, so it's doubly good to be here."





**Sky Bet's free £500 bet
HEATHER FELL**

OF all the punters seated around the tables in the Porter Tun Room, many would admit to enjoying the occasional flutter. Not so modern pentathlete Heather Fell, winner of sponsor Sky Bet's £500 free bet.

"I've never been inside a betting shop," she told John Inverdale, "never mind with £500!"

Proceeds from the bet go to a charity of her choice but despite some mouthwatering odds from Sky Bet's Tim Reynolds the lady would not be rushed.

Some of the tempting prices: England to win the 2010 Football World Cup (11-2); Andy Murray to win Wimbledon in 2010 (10-1); England to win the Six Nations rugby tournament (10-1).

“
I'VE NEVER BEEN
INSIDE A BETTING
SHOP...NEVER MIND
WITH £500
”

**The UK Sport Award
(Recognising fair play and
those who inspire others by being
role models)**

ALISTAIR BROWNLEE

*Presented by Baroness Sue Campbell,
chair of UK Sport*

IMAGINE you wake up each morning with the choice of swimming 1,500 metres in a river or lake, going on a 40km bike ride, or running 10km there's a good chance you might pull the covers over your head and go back to sleep.

Alistair Brownlee does not make that choice. He does all three. That's why, at 21, he is world triathlon champion.

In 2009 Yorkshireman Brownlee won all five races in the ITU world championship in which he competed, including the Grand Final event on Australia's Gold Coast.

In doing so he became the first athlete to hold world titles at junior, under-23 and senior level.

In that dramatic Grand Final Brownlee kept in the chasing pack during the bike ride and set off on the run in the company of defending world champion Javier Gomez and Olympic champion Jan Frodeno.

Brownlee and Gomez soon dropped Frodeno but it was the Briton who had the greater stamina over the final stages of the race, surging ahead of Gomez on the last lap to take the title.

Three months later Brownlee still seemed unable to comprehend his "fantastic year" and it was left to Baroness Campbell to declare: "This man is not only a superb athlete, but also a terrific young man. He is undoubtedly a great British prospect for 2012."

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John Inverdale elicits words of wisdom from Lord Triesman, Ian McGeechan (right) and Claire Taylor (lower right)

An Outstanding Contribution to Sport (The J.L.Manning Award)

ENGLAND HOCKEY
Presented by Ben Warn, director of sponsor Sky Bet

SIX years ago English hockey was broke. The sport which enjoyed a massive boost in interest and participation when Great Britain won the gold medal at the Seoul Olympics in 1988, was on its knees from an international perspective.

Along came Phil Kimberley as executive chairman to grab the game by the scruff of the neck and point it in the direction of London 2012.

With one of the Seoul gold medallists, David Faulkner, unflinching in his role as

England and Great Britain performance director, England - who will provide the bulk of the Great Britain Olympic squad - signalled their return to the world stage by winning the European Championships with a memorable final victory over Germany.

At the end of the year forward Ashley Jackson, 22, was named World Young Hockey Player of the Year, the first Briton to receive an IHF award.

Collecting the award on behalf of their sport were Kimberley, Faulkner, Jackson and England captain Barry Middleton.

Faulkner gave credit to Kimberley for "dragging English hockey out of the mire".

"Some of us thought we might never again have the opportunity to become serious players in Olympic territory," he said. "There's still a lot of hard work to do, but now we have a target to do our nation proud in 2012."

An Outstanding Sporting Performance (The Pat Besford Award)

PHILLIPS IDOWU
Presented by Lord Triesman, chairman of the Football Association

NOT SURPRISINGLY, the prize for the coolest dude at our awards went to Phillips Idowu. His was the Outstanding Performance of the Year, too.

Sporting a bleached silver hairdo and immaculate pin-stripe suit, Phillips looked like he had wandered from his City desk into the Brewery by mistake.

The screens showed Phillips's world-championship winning triple jump but only when master-of-ceremonies Jim Rosenthal mentioned the Beijing Olympics did the smile drop - just for a second or two.

It is well documented that Phillips berated himself for taking only silver in Beijing but bounced back to win the world title in Berlin in August, the only British male gold medal of those championships.

He said: "I've been doing this for a long



time and I see this award as recognition for a lot of hard work. But I'm not finished yet.

"My Berlin personal best was a long time coming. The previous one was years ago. There's a long way to go to 2012 but I'm not hiding from anyone," he threatened.

"So what's with all these changes of hair colour?" asked Rosenthal. "I like to blend into the background," Phillips replied.



Yes, we

FOLLOW an anniversary and an Olympic Year at your peril. If 2008 - Beijing and all that - inevitably saw the great and the greatest gracing the SJA 60th lunch tables, 2009 still managed to bring together the good and the great from a further year of major British achievement.

Along with Ian Cole, I was lucky enough to share the company of a member of the award winning England women's cricket team, the medium-fast bowler Isa Guha whose family hails from India to where Isa will be returning for a Test and one-day series in February.

Like her colleagues in the room, Isa was stunned by the SJA's award - "Wow, what an end to my cricket year!"

Claire Taylor, one of *Wisden's* five cricketers of the year, was with former SJA chairman Peter Wilson (never one to share his ladies around)



all loved it – again

along with captain Charlotte Edwards, Clare Connor and Megan Smith while Beth Morgan and Lillian Greenway were guests of SJA treasurer Randall Northam.

Claire summed up the team's feelings to John Inverdale and his roving mike: "I never expected this. During the year we developed a catch-phrase 'world domination' which kept us motivated. We played some really good cricket and the luck came our way. Now we have to find a way to keep on winning."

Inverdale's table-hop include a chat with outstanding modern pentathlete Heather Fell who, questioned about her training programme, said: "Had a run this morning and I'll do a bit of fencing this evening." Just like we sports hacks, really.

With British Lions coach Ian McGeechan, guests on SJA vice-chairman Stuart

Robinson's star-studded table included the disabled swimmer Eleanor Simmonds, Phillips Idowu and Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson.

McGeechan told the assembly: "Despite losing the Test series, it was one of the happiest Lions tours I've been on. My abiding memory is losing that second Test to a drop goal with time running out." Asked if he could bear to watch, he said: "Oh yes, you always watch even though you know that if it's one side of the posts your are still in the series and the other side you're out. You have to accept that."

SJA's main sponsors Sky Bet and UK Sport were both fully represented. England were quoted at 11-2 to win the World Cup and at 6-4 to land it in 2018. There was a powerful presence also from London 2012 with which

the SJA works so closely. Ellen Whitaker and Alistair Brownlee were among lunch chairman David Welch's guests, Mary Fitzhenry hosted successful gymnasts represented by Daniel Keatings, Louis Smith and Paul Hall and the Hockey Writers' Club collaborated by bringing England's David Faulkner and world young player of the year, Ashley Jackson among their guests.

The lunch was again supported by media colleagues either individually or by taking a table – and on Table 20, the Bill Bateson Memorial Table, a special glass was raised by former colleagues to an absent friend - former *News of the World* sports editor and SJA vice-chairman who died only recently and who never missed an SJA awards lunch. Bill would have loved it!

TREVOR BOND



The Committee Award BRITISH GYMNASTICS

Presented by Mark Foster, British Olympic swimmer and former world and Commonwealth champion

THE SJA Committee deliberated long and hard over this award and eventually decided to recognise the enormous progress being made by British Gymnastics.

Chairman of the awards sub-committee David Welch said: "Through all the efforts that are being made towards London 2012 one sport stood out.

British gymnastics has made such major progress over the last couple of years that we now have every right to expect our gymnasts will make their mark on the world stage."

Beth Tweddle was, once again the standard-bearer of the British team and in 2009 she won a world title for her floor routine.

On stage to collect the award were Louis Smith who, at Beijing, became the first British male gymnast to win an Olympic medal, and Daniel Keatings, first British man to win an all-round medal at the artistic world championships. They were joined by performance director Tim Jones.

Testing times for Vancouver media

TIMING is always important but reporters filing from the Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver will be presented with their own challenges. Midnight in London will be only 4pm in the afternoon in the Olympic city so, as in Beijing, much copy will appear online first.

Some 7,000 broadcasters and 2,800 accredited press will cover the games. They will stay in hotels in Vancouver and condominium style accommodation at the mountain centres in Whistler.

Journalists will receive the usual compendium of useful information while the Photographers' Guide also includes technical information including the lighting at venues.

The Main Press Centre and International Broadcast Centre will be at the Vancouver Convention Centre on the Waterfront, a contrast from Turin four years ago. There the old Fiat building at Lingotto was pressed into service, complete with rooftop racing track as used by Michael Caine & Co in The Italian Job.

The main workroom will be similar to those at other major games, with 600 workstations,

many available on a first-come first-served basis. Live television feeds from all competition venues will be available and the Info 2010 service will again provide biographies, reports, results, flash quotes etc.

Reporters can access INFO from their own computers within official venues on purchasing the Netzone access from the rate card services. They can then cut and paste such information as flash quotes which could prove a useful time-saver.

Travel services will operate from a central hub. The Olympic Village is 15 minutes away by bus and has two press conference rooms and a small media workroom. Transport between the media centre and designated press accommodation runs 24 hours a day.

As at recent Summer games, there will also be a centre for unaccredited medias in the city centre as well.

The Olympic Broadcasting Service OBS makes its Olympic bow in Vancouver. This is a dedicated company with a core of permanent staff which has taken up responsibility for broadcast coverage of all Olympic events and

also offers unilateral facilities to rights-holders. On the snow and Ice, the home nation will be hoping to lay one jinx. Although Montreal hosted the Olympics in 1976 and Calgary staged the Winter games in 1988, No Canadian has yet won Olympic gold on home soil.

Great Britain's team is expected to number around 50. In the women's bob former heptathlete Nicola Minichiello and Gillian Cooke took the women's world title earlier this year and must stand a great chance of emulating Nash and Dixon's victory in the two-man bob in 1964.

Shelley Rudman, the 2006 skeleton silver medallist, is back competing after becoming a mother and in ice dance the Scottish brother and sister combination John and Sinead Kerr expect great things after winning bronze at the European Championships.

The Scots will also be well to the fore in the Curling. In 2002, Rhona Martin and co took the gold and were mobbed on their return to Scotland. On the slopes, Chemmy Alcott insists this will be her year too.

Around 40 British writers and photographers are accredited and, for the first time, will receive a media handbook available exclusively on a USB stick and on the website.

The BOA expects to have at least one press attaché in Vancouver and Whistler. As at previous games, a dedicated BOA microsite will offer news stories, quotes, biographies and other items.

PHILIP BARKER



STEVE ROWE

The President's Award
ELLEN WHITAKER
Presented by Patrick Collins of the Mail on Sunday, the 2008 winner of the SJA's Sports Writer of the Year

IF you are born in Yorkshire and your name is Whitaker, it's a fair bet you will excel at showjumping. So it was for Ellen Whitaker, daughter of Steven, and niece of those world-renowned brothers John and Michael.

Ellen's 2009 was capped by the Horse of the Year Show, at which she won three titles - the Puissance, the Leading Jumper of the Year and the Speed Stakes.

The Puissance, in which she rode Latina B, involved jumping a seven-foot wall - a feat she was determined to repeat before Christmas at Olympia. "It's best not to think about that," she said. "You just do it."

Master-of-ceremonies Jim Rosenthal asked about the welfare of her principal horse Locarno which went lame last year, costing Whitaker a place at the Olympics.

She said: "He's on the way back, he's nearly ready but we are treating him gently. We did all the preparations for Beijing and it was such a disappointment when he went lame but we'll come back fighting."

January 31 deadline for World Cup accreditation

SUDDENLY, after those days, weeks and months when it all seemed a far-distant dream - not least for England fans - the final countdown is under way towards the 2010 World Cup finals in South Africa.

Broadcasters and international agencies have long had their logistical outlines sorted but England's qualification and newly-drawn match schedule have focused minds among the written media.

Tracking the action on the pitch is the simple factor; working out how to accomplish that in a country where travel is an issue is something else entirely.

Working facilities at the Confederations Cup rehearsal last summer were generally good. But the evidence of the draw in Cape Town demonstrated that, in the realm of media centre catering, lessons had not been learned and complaints had not been heeded.

The travel challenges of South Africa - no European-style intercity trains plus expensive flights with uncertain schedules - mean journalists are likely to spend more time than before in the

stadium media centres on their match days.

FIFA and the South African organisers have been told once more - and not only by this writer in his role as AIPS football commission chairman - that major improvements are necessary. The Germany 2006 template was ideal and following it should not be so difficult.

Travel complexities will mean much more pressure on media car parking. Once inside the 'FIFA ring' journalists will benefit from free internet access within media centres and tribunals at a World Cup for the first time.

However, be aware that wifi provision within South Africa's hotels is patchy and unpredictable, even in some of the most expensive. This is assuming, in any case, that accommodation issues can be resolved.

A whistle-stop tour of the new stadia, with FIFA and local organising officials, led to no doubts that the venues will be ready. Indeed, the new Durban stadium is magnificent - completed at a time and cost which puts Wembley to shame plus an arch up which a public viewing car travels to a platform a

giddy 320ft above the centre of the pitch.

However sites and size of some of the proposed mixed zones appeared questionable; also, scepticism born of long staircase experience doubts the validity of promised lifts remaining available for the media.

Now, the immediate practicalities: accreditation for the finals closes on January 31. All wishing to apply should contact their Football Association which has been allocated a certain number of unique codes (based on 2006 numbers varied to take account of qualifying nations etc). Once the journalist has received the code he/she should then use it to enter the application process via the FIFA Media Channel. Ticket applications for the group stage will operate in April, also via the Media Channel.

The FIFA Team Workshop, at which attendance for all national coaches is mandatory, is in Sun City from February 21-23. Accreditation application should be made directly through the Media Channel.

KEIR RADNEDGE



John Jackson

How Eddie the Eagle put Winter Olympics on the media map

WITH Vancouver gearing itself for the Winter Olympics there is still time for the organisers to pop over the Rockies and ask their friends in Calgary to recommend the best formula for success.

Without doubt, the immediate reply will be: "Get yourselves an Eddie." The 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics will always be remembered as the Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards Games. Even today, 21 years on, Eddie memorabilia is a big seller in Calgary stores. And all for a man who not only came last in both ski jumping events but finished with total points less than half those of every other competitor. For us scribes, with the difficult task of seeking the remotest evidence of British success, the 25-year-old, short-sighted plasterer from Cheltenham was manna from heaven. Skier Martin Bell finished eighth in the downhill, to this day a record for a British male, and received little more than a paragraph and line in the results section. Meanwhile, Eddie's exploits attracted page after page, with the *Daily Mirror* illustrating my despatches with a graph showing that if the competitors had jumped from the top of St Paul's Cathedral, Finnish gold medallist Matti Nykänen would have hit the Law Courts while Eddie would have been lucky to reach the Old Bell pub at the bottom of Fleet Street.

Eddie Edwards, whose thick lenses always steamed up in mid-air, admitted that when he first ventured to the top of a ski jump: "I looked down and was so frightened that my bum shrivelled up like a prune."

But he kept at it, and made the Olympics as the British ski-jumping record holder, albeit at the time he was ranked 55th in the world.

At the Calgary closing ceremony the Games president told the watching world: "At these Games some competitors have won gold, some have broken records and one has even flown like an eagle" - and 100,000 spectators spontaneously chanted "Eddie! Eddie!" It was the only time in the history of the Olympics that an individual has been mentioned.

From the moment Eddie landed in



Calgary it was pure farce. For his first press conference he arrived at the media centre without his pass, so was refused entry. He told about his glasses steaming up, having to wear six pairs of socks to make his boots fit, repairing his helmet with sticky tape, and so on.

One American journalist muttered loudly: "Is this Mr Magoo for real?" His two events were the biggest in town, with thousands of spectators hooping and hollering as Eddie clambered up to the starting point. He didn't jump, he simply plopped. One Norwegian judge complained: "My 10-year-old granddaughter could jump further." And other such comments prompted the entry requirements to be immediately toughened so no future Eddie could compete.

But, as winner Nykänen, stressed: "Don't you dare laugh at Eddie until you have the guts to try a jump." One man who will never forget Eddie The Eagle is Simon Clegg, recent chief executive of the British Olympic Association, who in Calgary found himself "minding" Eddie. This included taking him to Los Angeles where his fame had alerted the top Johnny Carson TV show.

Vancouver will be desperate for success, for at the moment Canada remains the only country to host Olympic Games (Montreal 1976, Calgary 1988) and fail to win gold on home soil.

Perhaps a Canadian Eddie The Eagle might not be the answer.

HATCH MATCH AND DESPATCH

Comings and goings at the sports desks around the country as observed by THE CHOPPER. E-mail your business news, on or off the record, to the. chopper@btopenworld.com

● **David Smith**, sports reporter with the *Evening Standard* for nearly 30 years, was made redundant just before Christmas, one of five sports desk jobs axed as the paper made 20 staff redundant following the announcement that it was to move to a single, West End Final edition each weekday from January.

Steve McKenley, the paper's Sports Editor, is also leaving, together with three sports subs.

The newspaper goes in to 2010, with the football World Cup, Winter Olympics and Commonwealth Games, with a sports reporting staff of four.

The *Standard* was re-launched in May after being bought for £1 from the *Daily Mail* group by Russian billionaire tycoon and former KGB spy **Alexander Lebedev**.

The latest move means the single-edition *Standard* will go off-stone at 12.30pm and could be on newsstands by around 2pm, with opportunity for slip editions during the afternoon.

Smith had been a stalwart of the sports desk since 1980. His departure leaves the newspaper without a specialist in F1 at a time when Britain will have two world champions in one team, without a boxing correspondent when a Londoner has just become world heavyweight boxing champion, and without a track and field expert with the countdown to the London 2012 Olympics well under way.

It was Smith who earlier this year, as a result of cut-backs at the newspaper, was asked to cover the Open golf championship on his own - when two or three writers might have been assigned in the past - and was given accommodation in a local caravan park.

● **Matt Driscoll**, the *News of the World* sports reporter sacked in April 2007 while on long-term sick leave for stress-related depression, was awarded £792,736 compensation after his accusations of bullying were accepted by the east London employment tribunal.

The tribunal found that Driscoll was victim to "a consistent pattern of bullying behaviour". The decision on compensation is the biggest of its kind in the media and with legal costs, owners News International's total bill will be well over £1 million.

Driscoll, who had worked at the paper from 1997, has not been in a full-time job since his dismissal.

● Football writer **Rob Beasley** secured a high-profile transfer in November, moving a few floors at Wapping from the *News of the World* to *The Sun*.

At *The Sun*, Beasley joins his former *News of the World* sports editor, Mike Dunn.

Beasley was the winner of the SJA's 2005 Sports Story of the Year for his scoop of Chelsea tapping up Ashley Cole.

Beasley joined the *News of the World* in 1994, having worked previously at the Press Association.

● There have also been major changes at the Second City's newspapers, with both Editors leaving the *Birmingham Mail* and the *Birmingham Post*, the latter becoming a weekly, a 96-page tabloid, coming out on Thursdays.

● The *Daily Telegraph* has hired Australian **Jacquelin Magnay** as its Olympics Editor in the run up to the 2012 London Games.

Magnay has reported on seven Olympics for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and in 2008 added the George Munster award for investigative journalism to her collection of industry gongs.

● At *Wall Street Journal Europe*, under new Editor Patience Wheatcroft, the former *Sunday Telegraph* Editor, Jonathan Clegg has been appointed Sports Editor and will be producing a daily page on the business of sport.

Clegg previously worked at the *East London Advertiser* and did occasional shifts at the *Guardian* website.

● *Observer Sport Monthly*, the widely acclaimed and award-winning supplement that came free with the world's oldest Sunday newspaper, is among the casualties of cut-backs at the title, wrapped up in a redesign announced by *The Observer's* owners, Guardian News & Media.

OSM was launched in 2000. It has been described by a former *Observer* editor as "one of the industry's most pioneering and respected sport magazines".

As well as contributing to the overall package which saw *The Observer* win the Newspaper of the Year award in 2007, it also contributed to the business's bottom line, with the ad department regularly filling all the available advertising positions in the magazine until the recent economic downturn.

Last year one of the magazine's writers, **Emma John**, was named as the SJA's Young Sports Writer of the Year, winning the Ian Wooldridge Memorial Trophy.

● Former sports journalist **Simon Greenberg** made his debut at the World Cup draw in his new role as Chief of Staff for England's 2018 World Cup bid.

Greenberg, 40, the one-time reporter at the *Mail on Sunday* who went on to become sports editor of the *Evening Standard* and head of sport at the *News of the World*, resigned from his high-profile job as Chelsea's director of communications in October.

SJA'S KEMPTON HOPEFULS ARE HAPPY WITH THEIR WINNINGS

SJA committee representatives and other members enjoyed a convivial evening of floodlit horse racing at Kempton Park as guests of sponsor Sky Bet.

Dale Tempest and his Sky Bet team hosted a box close to the winning post, serving drinks and hot food on a cold, damp November night.

Judging by the shrieks of delight most SJA racegoers managed at least one winner from eight races (Mary Fitzhenry particularly loud in this respect).

Trevor Bond appointed himself the Polytrack expert, alerting us to the course knowledge of jockeys Ted Durcan and Frankie Norton and advising us to always back the favourite in any seven-furlong all-weather contest.

Having had the Tote window slammed in his face just as he was about to back the winner of the first, Bond chalked up successes in the next two events. Needless to say, there were enough races on the card for the bookies to recoup his winnings - and more.

Pride of place among punters went once again to Petta Naylor, from Start2Finish, the SJA's event organisers. Petta scored with a 12-1 winner named Purely By Chance which, she admitted, she thought was Purley By Chance since Purley is her home town.

Win or lose - and this scribe failed to find the frame in eight starts - a good time was had by all and chairman Barry Newcombe said he hoped the evening would strengthen the SJA's continued good relations with Sky Bet.

IAN COLE

DAVID WELCH

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 Lucinda GREEN <i>Olympic medalist</i>	 Paul HAYWARD <i>Observer/Guardian</i>	 Iben JACOBS <i>Freelance</i>	 Martin JOHNSON <i>Sunday Times</i>	 Stephen JONES <i>Sunday Times</i>
 Paul KIMMAGE <i>Sunday Times</i>	 James LAWTON <i>Independent</i>	 Hugh McILVANNEY <i>Sunday Times</i>	 Sue MOTT <i>Freelance</i>	 Ivan PONTING <i>Freelance</i>
 John TAYLOR <i>Freelance</i>	 Tom WATT <i>Freelance</i>	 David WELCH <i>Freelance</i>	 Jim WHITE <i>Daily Telegraph</i>	 Laura WILLIAMSON <i>Daily Mail</i>

PLUS ● WILL GRAY (Freelance) ● MARTIN KEOWN (BBC/Freelance)
● DAVID MILLER (Freelance) ● SAM WALLACE (Independent)

Contact David Welch on all consultancy and marketing matters, and for any media enquiries relating to clients listed
T: 01632 274340 Mobile: 07774 811581 Kay Clarkson (PA) 0207 2339055 Mob: 07768 746605
E-mail: david@davidwelchmanagement.com and kay@davidwelchmanagement.com

CONTACTS

OFFICIAL ADDRESS

Sports Journalists' Association
c/o Start2Finish Event Management,
Unit 92, Capital Business Centre, 22
Carlton Road, South Croydon,
Surrey, CR2 OBS.

DIRECT CONTACTS

Petta Naylor

T: 020 8916 2234; F: 020 8916 2235

petta@s2fevents.co.uk

Sandra Phillips

T: 020 8916 2237

sandra@s2fevents.co.uk

President: Sir Michael Parkinson CBE

teresarudge@parkyproductions.com

Chairman: Barry Newcombe

barrynewcombe@gmail.com

Vice-chairman: Stuart Robinson

stuart@robinson43.freeserve.co.uk

Secretary: Steven Downes

stevenwdownes@btinternet.com

Treasurer: Randall Northam

randall@sportsbooks.ltd.uk

Membership: Bill Colwill OBE

Birchen, 31 Chesham Lane, Chalfont St

Peter, Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 OPG.

BColwill@aol.com

Immediate past-chairman:

Peter Wilson

peter.wilson04@btinternet.com

Bulletin editor: Keir Radnedge

kradnedge@sportsfeatures.com

GENERAL COMMITTEE

Philip Barker

philfiverings@btinternet.com

Ben Clissitt

ben.clissitt@guardian.co.uk

Ian Cole

icole@hotmail.co.uk

Mary Fitzhenry

mary@spokepromotions.com

Jim Munro

jim.munro@the-sun.co.uk

Ian Stafford

iandstafford@yahoo.co.uk

David Walker

david.walker@sundaymirror.co.uk

David Welch

david@davidwelchmanagement.com

EX-OFFICIO

Keith Elliott (Careers)

keithelliott99@yahoo.com

Paul Trow (Yearbook)

ptrow76780@aol.com

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Bulletin & Yearbook design

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“
THE BASIC
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McIlvanney: All the words are his stage

HUGH McIlvanney had sound advice to offer would-be reporters – and even many established ones - on receiving an honorary degree from De Montfort University.

McIlvanney was awarded an honorary Doctor of Arts - to add to his OBE - in recognition of his outstanding achievements throughout his career in journalism, both as a sports writer and news reporter for Scottish and English newspapers.

After 50 years in the business, he said: “I believe it is a tradition when receiving a degree that you give advice to students and I have two or three suggestions to those looking to get into my own scribbling profession.

“The basic discipline is reporting, but the key is to know that you cannot know it all. Never mistake information for knowledge, but educate yourself to make independent judgment. Amid all the blogging, twittering and such don't lose touch with books. Brush up on your Shakespeare as he's the main man.”

On the continuing battle to keep drugs and sport separate, he said: “Some people argue that sport should go for an 'everything goes' attitude to drugs but I can't go for a laboratory.”

He frowned on the marketing jargon infesting the Premier League and cautioned that the current levels of merchandising and wages in the game had compromised memories of the generations of footballers gone before.

“There is a rampant culture of celebrity in football, where status no longer needs to be about performance, but their lifestyles will count for more. It is brain numbing,” added McIlvanney.

He began on the Kilmarnock Standard at 17 as a news reporter, spent two years' national service with the RAF then returned to Scotland on the Daily Express and then The Scotsman. In 1992 he moved to the sports desk for The Observer before switching to The Sunday Times.

Dates for your diary

■ Thursday, January 31

FIFA World Cup accreditation closes

■ February 12 – 28

Winter Olympic Games (Vancouver)

■ March 8

SJA British Sports Journalism Awards (The Brewery, London)

** For lunches contact Mary Fitzhenry (see Contacts); for golf days, Paul Trow at ptrow76780@aol.com*