



The winner... from Scott Heavey, SJA's Photographer of the Year

## History for SJA as top award goes to Atherton

MICHAEL Atherton made the transition from England cricket captain to sportswriter supreme in eight years when he won Britain's most prestigious prize in sports journalism - the award as the SJA Sports Writer of the Year.

Atherton retired from the game at the end of the Ashes series of 2001, having played 115 Tests - 54 as captain - and scoring 7,728 runs. He moved into the press box, reporting cricket for the *Sunday Telegraph*, before succeeding Christopher Martin-Jenkins as cricket correspondent of *The Times* in 2008. He is the first retired sportsman to win this prestigious award, which is decided by a poll of national newspaper sports editors.

Atherton was 5,000 miles away covering England's tour of Bangladesh when the awards were handed out at the SJA Awards Dinner in The Brewery in Moorgate, London, but sent a video message, having explored the possibilities of flying to London and back before the start of the first Test.

Among the citations for Sports Writer, one sports editor said that Atherton was "peerless within his own sport but entertaining, thought-provoking and challenging on any other subject."

Atherton, who combines his *Times* duties with his role as a commentator and interviewer for Sky Sports' cricket coverage - voted TV programme of the year - was also named Sports Columnist of the Year and highly commended in the Specialist Correspondent category.

His prizes were collected by Tim Hallissey, sports editor of *The Times*. Runner-up to Atherton as Sports Writer of the Year was Paul Hayward of *The Observer*, with David Conn of *The Guardian* third.

IAN COLE

## FIFA onside with free internet at World Cup

SPORTS journalists from all over the world are writing from, and working at, the World Cup finals in South Africa with historic assistance from world federation FIFA.

This is the first World Cup at which internet access for the written media is free of any charge and free also of a technological lock-out (preventing journalists accessing the provider of their own choice). As FIFA's acting communications director, Nico Maingot, says: "We have a responsibility to take seriously anything which helps spread the message of what we are doing."

The World Cup lasts for five weeks. However in two years' time, for the 'mere' 17 days of the Olympic Games, it is planned to charge journalists for internet access - albeit not, it is understood, quite the extravagant charges levied in Beijing in 2008 or in Vancouver at this year's Winter Games.

Olympic directors, from president Jacques Rogge downwards, stress repeatedly on any and every occasion, the crucial importance of spreading the message of 'Olympic ideals' and, in particular, to the youth of the world.

The major media groups from around the world are able to swallow the cost of an internet rate card.

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

Not so journalists from smaller, poorer nations in the developing world which are, one assumes, the precise regions in which the IOC wishes its voice to be heard. Jayne Pearce, head of media operations for London 2012, addressed AIPS, the international sports media association, on this and associated issues at its annual congress in Antalya.

Her assurance that every workstation in the MPC and at the Games's 24 venues will have cabled internet access was welcome. However her hands appear to be tied on the issue of access charges - she expects them to be "reasonable" - despite LOCOG having an £80m sponsorship with BT, one of the world's biggest telecom organisations.

Internet was free, courtesy of UEFA, at the 2008 European Championship finals in Austria and Switzerland; internet was free, courtesy of the IAAF, at the World Athletics Championships in Berlin last August and internet is free at the World Cup in South Africa.

If nothing else, free internet for the media is surely good PR.

KEIR RADNEDGE

# Hockey pair set security standard in run-up

SECURITY at the Commonwealth Games was the focus for England hockey stars Richard Mantell and Crista Cullen at an SJA working lunch in Fleet Street.

The pair were joined by Sally Munday, chief executive of England Hockey, who announced that both the England men's and women's teams would be travelling to Delhi – despite the growing list of British competitors who had withdrawn for security reasons.

Mantell, the Reading defender, was in a perfect position to comment on playing sport in the Indian capital, having recently returned from the World Cup – coming home too soon, in fact, having suffered a broken and dislocated ankle in a Pool match against Pakistan.

He awoke from surgery to discover four armed guards around his hospital bed. "It was a surreal experience. I felt quite important. We spent a lot of time thinking about security and

I'd already spent three weeks locked in a hotel, not even able to wander out for a coffee. But I'd want to go again."

Both Mantell, accepting he had no more than a 50-50 chance of being fit for the Games, and Leicester defender Cullen backed England Hockey's decision to go to Delhi.

Cullen said: "All of us have to have the utmost belief in our administrators. A lot of places in the world aren't safe, but we will travel in the

## Walker follows his 'return' by stepping up as vice-chairman

DAVID WALKER is the new vice-chairman of the SJA. He succeeded Stuart Robinson, who stood down at the annual meeting after four years in office but remains on the general committee.

Walker has been a committee member since his return to newspapers as sports editor of the *Sunday Mirror* in 2005. Having worked for 13 years as a football reporter with the *Daily Mail* and three as deputy sports editor at the *Mail on Sunday*, he moved into football administration as director of PR and corporate affairs at Leeds United. Later he was managing director at Barnsley before coming back to national newspapers.

Robinson stepped down due to his professional concerns as chief sports photographer of the *Daily Express* heading towards the London Olympics. Ian Stafford, the *Mail on Sunday* sports writer, resigned from the general committee for similar reasons. So, the

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### IAN COLE

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line-up of officers and committee elected or re-elected at the AGM is:

President: Sir Michael Parkinson. Chairman: Barry Newcombe. Vice-chairman: David Walker. Secretary: Steven Downes. Treasurer: Randall Northam.

General committee: Philip Barker, Ben Clissitt, Ian Cole, Mary Fitzhenry, Jim Munro, Stuart Robinson, Steve Rose, David Welch.

Ex-officio members of the committee: Keith Elliott (Education and Training), Keir Radnedge (Bulletin editor), Paul Trow (Yearbook editor), Peter Wilson (Immediate past chairman).

Trevor Bond, who served the association as chairman, treasurer and secretary during more than 20 years on the general committee, was elected an honorary member.

One amendment to the constitution, proposed by the general committee, was carried. Any member whose subscription has not been paid in full within four months of the due date (Jan 1) may have his or her membership lapsed. One month's notice of intention to lapse shall be sent.

Chairman Barry Newcombe, in his annual report, said it was apparent that the SJA is becoming an increasingly relevant organisation in the eyes of many sporting bodies. Evidence of this had been the February debate between the then Sports Minister Gerry Sutcliffe and 'shadows' Hugh Robertson and Don Foster.

Newcombe thanked UK Sport for its continued sponsorship but noted that Sky Bet, the other lead sponsor, had decided to withdraw



after two successful years. The SJA's two showcase events, the British Sports Awards and the British Sports Journalism Awards, were again successful, despite the recession. The Journalism Awards boasted a record number of entries.

Tributes were paid to the work of Peter Wilson who has stood down as chairman of judges and to Sandra Phillips who has supervised the organisation of both awards events and who was presented with a trademark framed Kevin Macey cartoon.

Treasurer Randall Northam reported that the association's finances looked sound for a further year but a replacement sponsor for Sky Bet was vital if the SJA were to maintain its activities at the same level. Membership stands at around 750.

**"PRE-ELECTION DEBATE SHOWS HOW THE SJA IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY RELEVANT"**  
– Barry Newcombe

# to Commonwealth Games

knowledge that everything possible has been done to safeguard the players." Earlier this year the 'lunch season' began with a fascinating insight from Alistair Brownlee into what it takes to be a triathlon world champion.

He earned the crown last year by winning five of the eight legs of the Dextro Energy ITU world championship, followed by the Grand Final in Australia. That earned the 21-year-old from Leeds recognition from the SJA last December

with the UK Sport Award. At London 2012 the triathlon will take place in Hyde Park, starting with two laps of the Serpentine. Thus, because of its Olympic significance, the London leg of this year's Dextro Energy world championship series over the weekend of July 24-25 becomes hugely important.

"This is the big one," says Brownlee. "This is the one to win. It's also great to lay down a marker in front of your home fans."

# Homework is essential for London 2012, warns Pearce

JAYNE PEARCE, head of press operations for London 2012, put flesh on the bones of the media set-up during AIPS Congress in Antalya, Turkey.

She told international delegates: "I just want to get London 2012 on your radar. It's a big, vibrant, and busy city - and members of the media will need to do their homework before they come to us."

Pearce revealed that there will be cabled internet access at press desks in all 24 venues incorporating access to an enhanced info system. She anticipated that the charge for internet access would be "very reasonable." The rate card for London 2012 will be announced at the World Press briefing in London from August 2-4.

Media will be able to stay in 5000 rooms in some 30 hotels in the Bloomsbury area and accreditation for the 5,600 journalists will be deadlined in January 2012.

The Main Press Centre in Olympic Park will be clean so accredited media can move through the MPC and onto events within the Park. London is working on a series of innovative photo positions under photo chief Bob Martin.

Pearce assured her audience that London intended to provide better media catering than had been available in Beijing and Vancouver.

Earlier this spring SJA members were able to judge the pace of progress at the Olympic Park during of the third such tour, courtesy of LOCOG.

Progress was most noticeable in and around the main Olympic Stadium, now equipped with special floodlights to suit high-definition TV. The Media and Broadcast Centre is heading towards completion while the Aquatics Centre is already being tested for its water-holding qualities.



STEVE ROWE

Patrick Eagar, the doyen of cricket photographers, once again demonstrated his prowess as a golfer by snapping up the winner's medal in the association's spring meeting at Surbiton GC. He was

presented by chairman Barry Newcombe with bottles of Chateau Millas donated by SJA member and fencing expert Graham Morrison. Terry Probert (right) won the guests' competition.

## Barker voted on to the UEPS executive

PHILIP BARKER, already an SJA committee member, topped the ballot for election to the ruling executive of the European sports writers' association, UEPS.

In a vote between 10 candidates for eight positions at the UEPS meeting in Antalya, Turkey, Barker polled 30 votes out of a possible 31. Barker, 48, is a freelance broadcaster working for Sky Sports and broadcasting regularly on Olympic matters for the BBC and TalkSport.

A member of the SJA for six years, he is renowned for his knowledge of Olympic history and, in recognition, received the Vikelas prize in 2008. He has worked at the Olympic Games of Atlanta, Sydney, Athens and Beijing, and also at the Turin Winter Games. Barker said: "Only last week we had the opportunity to see the Olympic Park taking shape. The Main Press Centre rising out of

the ground so close to the Olympic Stadium was an inspiring sight. We already have a wonderful relationship with the organising committee and I look forward to maintaining and strengthening links between our organisations as a result of this election."

SJA chairman Barry Newcombe said: "It is satisfying to see a British delegate back in the heart of UEPS, where Morley Myers served so well for many years. I know from working alongside Philip at Beijing that his deep knowledge of the Olympics was valued by so many colleagues from other countries as well as the British media."

Other UEPS changes saw Yannis Daras of Greece replace Poland's Jerzy Jakobsche as president with Charles Camenzuli, of Malta, new secretary ahead of Rik Lamoral, of Belgium. Turkey's Murat Agca took over the treasurer's post left vacant by Daras.

“I’VE GOT THE MOST FANTASTIC JOB... IN THE SPACE OF A MONTH I INTERVIEWED RUSSELL CROWE, ROLF HARRIS AND LILY ALLEN - WHILE WATCHING ENGLAND PLAY CRICKET”

– Jonathan Agnew

Jonathan Agnew receives his award from Tim Hallissey sports editor of *The Times*



# England’s Ashes victory focuses voters’ minds

WHEN members of the SJA were asked to vote for their TV and radio programme and broadcaster, it came as no surprise that the year’s main sporting event - England’s regaining of the Ashes - should figure prominently in their thinking.

While the victory of Andrew Strauss’s team did not quite reach the heady heights of 2005 when Michael Vaughan’s side reclaimed the precious urn after 18 years, cricket fans around the country spent long, anxious days tuned in to Sky or to the BBC’s Test Match Special.

So, when the voting forms arrived, it was easy to put those two admirable programmes top of the list.

Jonathan Agnew - just like the Sports Writer of the Year, Michael Atherton - walked straight from the field and into the Press Box. Agnew was a fast bowler who, in 12 years with Leicestershire, took 666 wickets. Having twice topped 100 wickets in a season many believe he was unfortunate to win only three Test caps. But he saw his future in the media

and, after stints with BBC Radio Leicester, joined the late, lamented *Today* newspaper. After a spell as a cricket pundit with the *Daily Express*, Agnew became BBC cricket correspondent and Test Match Special commentator, where he formed an instant rapport with the late Brian Johnston.

On our awards night Agnew was visibly moved to collect not only Radio Sports Programme of the Year on behalf of his Test Match Special colleagues, but also Radio Broadcaster of the Year.

“I’ve got the most fantastic job,” Agnew told us. “In the space of a month I interviewed Russell Crowe, Rolf Harris and Lily Allen - while watching England play cricket!”

Agnew pipped John Inverdale for the Radio Broadcaster prize and the versatile Inverdale, who regularly plays a part in the hosting of our lunches and dinners, may feel he suffers when the votes are cast because of his close involvement in our events.

Nasser Hussain, another former England

cricket captain-turned-journalist, was in the audience to collect Sky’s award for their Ashes coverage, voted best TV Sports Programme. Hussain, one of the programme’s commentary team, said: “It’s the first time I’ve been successful in anything to do with the Ashes.”

He gave an insight into life with the Sky team, something like: “Make sure Bumble (David Lloyd) has his medication to hand, Gower doesn’t fall asleep in the afternoon and Beefy (Ian Botham) has recovered to face the first ball of the morning after whatever went on the night before.”

Last but not least - it almost goes without saying - Jeff Stelling was voted TV Broadcaster of the Year. For four years in a row Stelling won the broadcast award. Now, after the awards split, Stelling was first up to take the TV broadcaster prize for his guidance through the Soccer Saturday afternoon.

“I’m so glad you’re not tired of us yet,” he said.

IAN COLE



## Heavey just edges top prize ahead of Melville

SCOTT HEAVEY of Action Images was judged Photographer of the Year in a photo-finish with Toby Melville of Reuters.

The judges deliberated long into the night over this award and at one point it seemed the pair could not be separated.

In the end Heavey got the decision, having won the Sports Portfolio section and been highly commended in both the Specialist Photographer and Young Photographer categories.

Heavey's victory meant Action Images scooped the premier prize for the first time.

Melville earned special praise from the judges for his Specialist Portfolio. "This was truly exceptional and brought the standards of the category to an all-time high." In that category Ady Kerry was given a special mention for a portfolio from field hockey,



"proving that minority sports have a definitive place in the competition and can offer an exceptional and challenging opportunity".

Winner of Young Photographer, with an age limit of 30, was the Press Association's Andrew Matthews.

Freelance Eddie Keogh collected Sports News Picture for his snap of Chelsea's Didier Drogba, eyeballs bulging, screaming abuse at Norwegian referee Tom Ovrebo after the last-gasp Champions League semi-final defeat against Barcelona.

Picture of the Year, snapped by the Press Association's Gareth Copley, showed England batsman Jonathan Trott straining every sinew in diving to make his ground.

## Fordyce and Booth land blog double

WINNERS of the SJA's first internet awards were the BBC's Tom Fordyce for a Live Blog with the *Daily Mail's* Lawrence Booth taking the prize for a regular Blog or Column.

Fordyce was praised by the judges for "his sense of wonder about sport" which could serve as a template for sports blogs of the future.

As for the Internet Reporter, the contest produced joint winners - Kevin Eason of Timesonline and Duncan Mackay, a former Sports Writer of the Year, now with insidethegames.

The SJA is keen to recognise our regional sports writers and an old friend Mike Aitken, recently retired, was named Regional Writer for a second time. One judge said "Aitken is a class act". They added: "His entries demonstrate the skill and craft he has honed over the years." Aitken's performance was tough on Amanda Little, of Cumbrian Newspapers, who was runner-up for the second year.

Cartoonists can brighten any sports page and, over the years, their involvement in these SJA awards has grown. A new name on the trophy this year was Paul Wood of *Private Eye*. Only three points separated the top three in this category, but the judges decided that Wood "crams a great deal of information into a small space."



The adage: "One picture is worth a thousand words," is widely attributed to American Frederick R. Barnard, writing about the power of graphics and images in advertising almost a century ago. That derivation is not

universally accepted; some researchers claim it originated in Japan or China. No-one in the media, however, ever dare question the concept and the high standard of entries for the SJA photographic awards





underlined the reason. Gareth Copley of the Press Association won Picture of the Year with his image of the flying Jonathan Trott while Andrew Matthews's boxing study helped earn him the Young Photographer

prize. Reuters's Toby Melville was Specialist Photographer while Scott Heavey of Action Images claimed both the Photographic Portfolio award and the overall Sports Photographer of the Year acclamation.



**Sports Writer of the Year:** Michael Atherton (*The Times*). Runner-up: Paul Hayward (*Observer*). Third: David Conn (*The Guardian*)

**Team of the Year:** *Daily Telegraph* – The Ashes. Highly commended: *Guardian and Observer* – The Ashes

**Doug Gardner Award for services to sports journalism and the SJA:** Hugh McIlvanney

**Cartoonist:** Paul Wood (*Private Eye*). Nick Newman (*Sunday Times*)

**Feature Writer:** Owen Slot (*The Times*). Highly commended: Donald McRae (*The Guardian*)

**Regional Writer:** Mike Aitken (freelance). Highly commended: Amanda Little (Cumbrian Newspapers)

**Columnist:** Michael Atherton (*The Times*). Highly commended: Oliver Holt (*Daily Mirror*)

**Interviewer:** Donald McRae (*The Guardian*). Highly commended: Matt Lawton (*Daily Mail*)

**News Reporter:** David Conn (*The Guardian*). Highly commended: Paul Kelso (*Daily Telegraph*)

**Specialist Correspondent:** Henry Winter (*Daily Telegraph*). Highly commended: Michael Atherton (*The Times*)

**Young Writer (Ian Wooldridge Trophy):** Oliver Brown (*Daily Telegraph*). Highly commended: Laura Williamson (*Daily Mail*)

**Sports Story:** Paul Kelso (*Daily Telegraph* - "Bloodgate"). Highly commended: David Conn (*The Guardian* - "Hillsborough cover up")

**Diarist:** David Hills (*Observer*). Highly commended: Charles Sale (*Daily Mail*).

**Betting Writer:** Steve Palmer (*Racing Post*). Highly commended: Derek McGovern (*Daily Mirror*)

**Sports Photographer of the Year:** Scott Heavey (Action Images)

**News Picture:** Eddie Keogh (freelance). Highly commended: Andrew Couldridge (Action Images), Mike Hewitt (Getty Images)

**Specialist Photographer:** Toby Melville (Reuters). Highly commended: Laurence Griffiths (Getty Images), Scott Heavey (Action Images) and Eddie Keogh (freelance)

**Young Photographer:** Andrew Matthews (Press Association). Highly Commended: Scott Heavey (Action Images), Paul Thomas (freelance)

**Photographic Portfolio:** Scott Heavey (Action Images). Highly Commended: Tom Jenkins (*The Guardian and Observer*) and Toby Melville (Reuters)

**Picture of the Year:** Gareth Copley (Press Association). Highly commended: Andrew Couldridge (Action Images) and Hugh Routledge (freelance)

**Internet writer:** Kevin Eason (timesonline) and Duncan Mackay (insidethegames)

**Live Blog:** Tom Fordyce (bbc.co.uk). Highly commended: Rob Smyth (guardian.co.uk)

**Regular Blog or Column:** Lawrence Booth (dailymail.co.uk). Highly commended: Edward Gorman (timesonline)

**Radio Programme:** Test Match Special (BBC). Runner-up: Five Live Sport (BBC)

**Radio Broadcaster:** Jonathan Agnew (BBC). Runner-up: John Inverdale (BBC)

**TV Programme:** Test match cricket (Sky Sports). Runner-up: Soccer Saturday (Sky Sports)

**TV Broadcaster:** Jeff Stelling (Sky Sports). Runner-up: Clare Balding (BBC)

## TAKING CENTRE STAGE ON AWARDS NIGHT: HUGH MCILVANNEY ACKNOWLEDGES THE DOUG GARDNER AWARD – PRESENTED FOR SERVICES TO SPORTS JOURNALISM AND TO THE SPORTS JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION





STEVE ROWE

# McRae is hailed as new master of the sports interview

ONE of the SJA British Sports Awards' longest-running sequences came to an end when Paul Kimmage of the *Sunday Times* had to move over after dominating the Sports Interviewer award for five years.

His successor was the *Guardian's* Donald McRae, with Matt Lawton of the *Daily Mail* highly commended.

The judges said that McRae submitted "an outstanding portfolio, with interviews that were revelatory and beautifully written". Another judge said he adds subtlety and style to his intelligent writing.

McRae was also highly commended in the Feature Writer category, won by Owen Slot of *The Times*. Slot, said the judges, submitted a terrific variety of topics, topped off by an interview with Tim Montgomery, the American athlete who has been stripped of his 100m records for using performance-enhancing drugs and is currently imprisoned on fraud and drugs charges but still trains in the hope he can make London 2012.

"It went right to the heart of a self-inflicted tragedy that was brought vividly to the page," said the citation.

Paul Kelso of the *Daily Telegraph* claimed the Sports Story award for his exposure of the cover-up attached to rugby's Harlequins

"Bloodgate" scandal. Judges said this story "set the agenda" for several months. "The revelation of a cover-up was a sensational new twist in the affair."

News Reporter went to David Conn of *The Guardian*, who accumulated almost three times as many votes as runner-up Kelso. One judge said Conn "is a rare newshound, a reporter who brings real depth to his riveting stories."

Henry Winter of the *Daily Telegraph* was named Specialist Correspondent. Judges praised Winter's knowledge of football and one said the writer "has unforced humour that makes the reader smile". Another judge applauded Winter's "moving and compelling interviews, strong comment and excellent match reporting."

There were new faces and familiar faces coming up to the podium on this very special night. Oliver Brown of the *Daily Telegraph* won Young Writer for the second time. His citation said "he digs deep, travels far and shows he can get to the heart of things".

David Hills of *The Observer* won Diarist for the second successive year. One judge said: "Hypocrites, shysters and downright liars watch out. You can pull the wool over the eyes of many in sport - but not of our winner."



## Telegraph out in front with team of all the talents

ONE of the most keenly contested categories is the Team Award, because it rewards the all-round performance of a sports desk - the writers, photographers, sub-editors, the stone subs (or whatever they are called now!) and even the administrator who orders tickets, travel and accommodation.

This year was no exception with four newspapers - the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian/Observer* and *Times* - short-listed for their Ashes coverage.

The *Mail* had a second recognition for their Wimbledon reporting, while the *Guardian* was noted for its Champions League pages and the *Sunday Times* for its coverage of the



British Lions' tour of South Africa. The *Telegraph*, though, was way out in front, according to the judges. Its Ashes coverage pictures were striking amid excellent design and all topped off by some great sports writing. The award was collected (above right) by BBC-bound former sports editor David Bond from Nasser Hussain.



# John Jackson

## Winter Olympics tragedy at Vancouver offers sad reminder of the dangers in this sporting life

THE TRAGIC death of the Georgian luger, and lack of snow, at Vancouver brought a sense of déjà vu for this veteran of 10 Winter Olympics. It was Innsbruck 1964 and luge was making its debut at a Winter Games. Just as with women's boxing and its introduction at London 2012, there was serious discussion about it being far too dangerous.

And on the first day of training I was on hand to witness the death of a British competitor. Forty six years on such tragedy was repeated in almost identical circumstances.

The Austrians opened the Igls track despite it lacking the certainly improved safety requirements of today, such as protective lip covers over the treacherous ice bends.

Subsequently, on his first practice run two weeks before the Games opening, Britain's Kazimierz Kay-Skrzypski, a 50-year-old Anglo-Pole, misjudged a bend, shot into the air, and hit two policemen before smashing into a tree. He died in hospital a few hours later.

From the chaotic scenes on the edge of the ice run, I followed the ambulance to the downtown hospital. There was no question, as now, of waiting outside for an official statement. As I spoke English I was taken without hesitation past a stretcher bearing one of the badly injured policemen and into, wait for it - the operating theatre. My colleague, an AP photographer, also.

Kay-Skrzypski was being tended by the British team doctor who had been summoned from a very liquid lunch.

On spotting me he stopped tending the patient, ripped off his gloves, held out his hand with the greeting: "Great to see you again, old boy. It's been a couple of years since we had that pleasant session at Perth (1962 Commonwealth Games)."

The athletes already in the Olympic Village turned out in force to pay tribute to their dead rival. Little did they know they would be repeating the process a few

days later, with this time the Australian flag being lowered to half mast.

The 1964 Innsbruck Games were hit from the start with a total lack of snow. In those days there were no artificial snow machines, so battalions of Austrian soldiers were drafted in to transport lorry loads of the white stuff from the nearby Brenner Pass. This meant the ski runs were hand-laid, to a certain width.

I was also present when the downhill skiers started practice runs and, sadly, 19-year-old Aussie Ross Milne flew off the narrow course and into a tree. Two deaths were not the ideal start to my first Winter Games.

There had to be some consoling balance: none better than when I next stood at the bottom of the bobsleigh run to hail the gold medal for Great Britain won by our two-man team, Tony Nash and Grenadier Guards Captain Robin Dixon, now Lord Glentoran.

That night brought many an excuse for celebration schnapps. And the team doctor was there, too.

**"THE ATHLETES ALREADY IN THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE TURNED OUT IN FORCE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THEIR DEAD RIVAL"**

## HATCH MATCH AND DESPATCH

*Comings and goings at the sports desk around the country*

— by STEVEN DOWNES

● *The Sun* and the *News of the World* are axing at least four senior staff from their sports desks: Rob Shepherd, from the Sunday title, football reporters Ian McGarry and Janine Self from the daily paper, and north-west-based Sun sports photographer Mark Robinson.

McGarry and Shepherd were both likely to have gone to South Africa to cover the tournament, while Robinson's absence means that the country's biggest selling daily newspaper will now have only one sports photographer, **Richard Pelham**, and he will be away at the World Cup during Wimbledon.

A week before *NoW* football editor Shepherd was informed he was redundant, **Daniel King**, a past SJA sports news story award-winner, joined the paper from the *Mail on Sunday*.

● At least 70 more jobs are to be axed as *The Times* and *Sunday Times* look to cut 10 per cent from the titles' budgets in an effort to stem what one of the newspapers' editors described as "unsustainable losses". Fifty jobs will go from *The Times*, and up to 30 from the *Sunday Times*. Sources suggest that sport will come in for particular attention on both titles.

● The Basketball Journalists' Association has been launched. The new group will bid to offer professional journalists and broadcasters a channel for dialogue among themselves and with the myriad bodies involved in the British game. For details, or to be added to the mailing list, contact **Mark Woods** on [bjauk@britball.com](mailto:bjauk@britball.com)

● SJA committee member **David Welch** has been busy around his management business, DWM, signing promotional deals through to London 2012 with governing bodies British Volleyball and England Hockey.

● Cricket writer and broadcaster **Christopher Martin-Jenkins** is to be the next President of the Marylebone Cricket Club. The former cricket correspondent of the *Telegraph*, *The Times* and the BBC begins his one-year term of office on October 1, succeeding the former Sussex captain, John Barclay.

● PA Sport's **Martyn Ziegler** fulfilled a life-long ambition at the Vancouver Winter Olympics, when he carried the Olympic torch for a leg of the relay ahead of the opening ceremony.

● **Steve Cording**, a previous sports news editor at the *Daily Mail*, was named in

February is now the head of sport at the *Evening Standard*. **Tim Nichols** is deputy.

● **Stephen Bierley**, a *Guardian* sports desk stalwart since 1979, is among the latest members of staff to leave as part of wide ranging redundancies to try to stem the business's £100,000 per day losses. "The *Guardian* had a voluntary redundancy scheme, which I had a look at last year, and this year I decided to take," said Bierley, 62. *The Guardian* will be using freelance **Simon Cambers** for its tennis coverage, with **Kevin Mitchell** covering the Grand Slam tournaments.

● The *Observer's* re-launch coincided with the departure of three sports desk stalwarts, **Jason Tomas**, **Eddie Butler** and **Maurice Hamilton**, all of whom had worked at the paper for a decade or more, covering football, rugby and features and F1 respectively.

● **Ben Clissitt** took up a new job as head of sport at the Telegraph Group in mid-April. Clissitt took redundancy from *The Guardian* in January, when he was immediately linked with the Telegraph job left vacant by **David Bond's** departure.

● Many leading figures from sport and sports journalism attended the memorial service for former *News of the World* sports editor and SJA vice-chairman **Bill Bateson** at St Bride's, Fleet Street. **Gary Lineker**, **Patrick Collins**, **Peter Hayter**, **Tom Crone** and Bateson's daughter, **Sally Read**, all delivered readings.

● **Vic Clements**, a lifelong member of the SJA and before that the SWA, has died. He was 86. The former photographer with *The Sun* and *News of the World* passed away in Northern General Hospital, Sheffield, on April 11.

● Lots of comings and goings in the news rooms of BBC and ITN. The BBC appointed **Richard Burgess** as its head of sports news. He was most recently editor of sports programmes at BBC Radio 5 Live. This follows the arrival of David Bond as the BBC's sports editor. Also joining as sports correspondent is another SJA member, **Dan Roan**. Roan replaces **James Munro**, who left the BBC to become head of communications at the LTA last year. Roan previously worked at Setanta, and before that at Sky.

ITN has made **Steve Scott** its sports editor. Former Setanta staffer **Natalie Pirks** was appointed sports reporter.

● **Kevin Eason**, the winner of the SJA's sports internet reporter prize in March, has returned to his former job as Formula One correspondent at *The Times*. Eason takes over from **Ed Gorman**, who has been promoted to a desk job on the foreign desk. Other changes at Wapping have seen **John Hopkins** retire as golf correspondent, to be replaced by **Peter Dixon**.

## FERGUSON ENDS SILENCE – BUT TO TALK HORSE SENSE

SIR ALEX Ferguson broke his six year boycott of BBC... but to talk about only horse racing. His interview on BBC Five Live came after his horse What A Friend won the Totesport Bowl at the Grand National Meeting at Aintree.

"Nobody died," he said, reflecting on Manchester United's Champions League exit the previous night. From next season, any Premier League manager refusing to talk to broadcast media will risk being fined. Only one question: why has this taken so long?

The 39th Fixture will not happen but the Premier League is determined to conquer the world with the launch of Premier League TV. Billed as a 24-hour channel, it can be found everywhere but the UK. IMG, which already handles the League's overseas distribution, has been contracted to produce the content.

ESPN added to its portfolio with the addition of mobile phone rights to the Premier League for the next three seasons. Sky had held them for the preceding three years but will continue to offer the service for the UEFA Champions League.

The World Cup will also be available on mobile phones in similar fashion. The production here will be undertaken by HBS, the organisation responsible for the world TV feed from South Africa.

Sky launched its 3-D channel for public houses with coverage of Chelsea's win at Old Trafford. The move followed the successful broadcast of Arsenal v Manchester United earlier in the season and four further matches focused on the title race.

Those funny glasses were also needed by cricket fans after the Indian Premier League decided that its final would be shown in 3-D. The MCC marketing department sprung into action to offer a gala viewing on a large screen with Indian food thrown in. At £225.00 per person rather more a takeaway was on offer.

PHILIP BARKER



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When chairman met Mayor: Barry Newcombe and Boris Johnson

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# Johnson lets slip his own vision for 2012

TWO YEARS from the 2012 Olympics, London Mayor Boris Johnson was in full training for the big event when a party of SJA members arrived at City Hall for an informal reception, part of the association's continuing involvement in the build-up to the London Games.

The visit coincided with the launch on TV of London mascots Wenlock and Mandeville, which gave Mayor Boris the opportunity to open up with: "These two could be the Cameron and Clegg of the Olympics."

The Mayor remains as enthusiastic as ever about the prospects, saying: "The Olympic Games are fantastically popular in spite of the recession and in spite of the fact that people are starting to really worry about the cost."

He pointed to a white space on his map of London and said: "That area to the north of Greenwich is going to be transformed by sport. It's going to be a wonderful thing for east London, 8,000 homes built, the Stratford rail link, the Westfield shopping centre. You can do fantastic things just by getting in a world class sporting event."

Johnson was full of praise for a grass roots programme undertaken by Kate Hoey, the former Minister for Sport which, he said, involved "moving these incredible swimming

pools around London like glorified sheep dips. Very warm, loads of chlorine."

The Mayor's Olympic spokesman, Neale Coleman, also reviewed the controversial issue of what happens to the Olympic Stadium after the Games circus departs.

He said: "We have been very encouraged by the interest shown in the stadium's legacy – some of it well publicised and some not. It hasn't all been from football clubs, we've had interest from major event companies too. We'll probably reach a point where the stadium is used for a variety of different sports."

Mayor Boris offered a tantalising hint about his own future when SJA member Neil Wilson asked whether he expected to be handing over the Olympic flag to the Mayor of Rio.

Johnson, well aware that his term in office expires two months before the London Games begin, replied: "I suspect you are really asking if I am prepared to stand for re-election. Look, this is a fantastic job, the best in the world. Well you would want to continue, wouldn't you? I suppose I'll have to make some kind of declaration at some time."

Wilson responded: "I think you just have."

IAN COLE

## Dates for your diary

■ **Tuesday-Thursday, June 22-25**  
IOC co-ordination commission (London)

■ **Monday-Wednesday, August 2-4**  
London 2012: World Press Briefing

■ **Wednesday, December 8**  
SJA Sports Awards  
(The Brewery, London)

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