

Clare Balding



Games. This is a stark contrast to the show she presented in Sydney in 2000 when, due to the time difference, she was on air at the ungodly hour of 6am.

“Being on after 10pm this time, I think we can afford to have a sense of humour and a quirkiness to the programme, that perhaps the programmes covering the live events can’t,” says Clare, who is busy preparing for her third Olympics, having also covered events in Atlanta for BBC Radio.

“We’re tuning into a different sort of audience at that time of night and we can show events that aren’t necessarily the headlines, not just the 100m final, but we can also cover the stories like Eric the Eel and the Venezuelan woman at the Winter Olympics who came out of her luge – I just couldn’t stop laughing at that, it was the funniest thing I’d ever seen!”

Clare’s also hoping that audience participation will help form the show, as there will be a large interactive aspect, with viewers being able to send text messages and emails as the show is on air. “The nature of the texts and emails we get will, to some extent, dictate the tone. If you’re getting a good response from people who are enjoying the show, then I think it really helps. I think it’s about making people feel very comfortable and making them feel part of it, and enjoying it in a very British way.”

Despite the late nights, Clare is adamant that she will get to see her favourite event, even though it’ll mean burning the candle at both ends for a few days. “The three-day eventing is my favourite – I adore it. It’s what I always wanted to do when I was young,” says the former amateur flat jockey and champion lady

Name: Clare Balding
First BBC job: In 1993, Clare presented the racing bulletin on Danny Baker’s *Morning Edition* on BBC Radio 5. She then moved to BBC Radio Five Live when it launched in March 1994.
Career highlights: A leading amateur flat jockey in 1989 and 1990 and Champion lady rider in 1990. Clare first worked in television in 1994, making her debut at Royal Ascot, following a recommendation from Julian Wilson. She eventually replaced Wilson in December 1997, on his retirement. RTS Sports Presenter Of The Year 2003.
Olympic experience: Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000 Summer Olympics.

Clare Balding can look forward to having a lie in in Athens, where, together with Craig Doyle, she’ll be hosting a late-night Olympics highlights programme for the duration of the

rider. "It'll mean working a long night and getting up very early in the morning, but it's worth it. I just love it, I would be absolutely mortified if I couldn't go," she laughs.

"I think we've probably got the strongest chance of a gold medal in the eventing. We've got a really strong team and I think they deserve all the attention they get. We got a silver medal in Sydney and they did great out there but, ever since, all the team wants is gold. Silver just wasn't good enough for them. They were actually really annoyed about it, which is pretty unusual for a British team – it's usually, 'Oh well done, we've finished second,' but this lot aren't like that – they really expect to win gold and nothing else will do!"

Eventing aside, Clare's also looking forward to seeing the long-distance runners – especially Paula Radcliffe – the rowers and the swimmers in action in Athens. "I think Ian Thorpe will be a big name again and there's bound to be another swimmer who can win a multitude of medals. The British swimmers were a disaster in Sydney but Bill Sweetenham, an Australian coach, has come in and just turned it around. He won't take anybody to the Games who he doesn't think can make a final. He's got some good swimmers on his hands at the moment. The whole attitude of the team is very different to how it was four, eight or even 12 years ago. Not since David Wilkie and Adrian Moorhouse have we had such a good team."

Clare's also optimistic that, despite Athens being given such a bad press in recent months, the hosts will come good and put on an Olympic Games to be proud of. "I know there's been a lot of stuff about Athens and I know there's the feeling that it's going to be a

