

# Commentator Colin ready to hit airwaves at Heritage Oil Open

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Colin Wilson preparing for his commentary duties

Colin Wilson is limbering up his larynx in preparation for commentating on the Heritage Oil Open.

Colin will be lead commentator for BT Sport, who are covering the final stages of the event in London's Olympic Park.

And the former England international has been busy doing his homework on the players to make sure he is never lost for words on air.

"I want to bring the players to life for the viewers," he said. "My specific preparation will be around player profiles and results between players who are in the event, getting the back story about their preparation and whether they are in good or bad shape, whether they are gunning for a particular person and why they've come to this particular event.

"It's also important that the women are promoted to the same extent as the men."

Colin will also draw on his playing experience and status as an international-level coach to help give the best coverage possible.

He said: "My job is to help people enjoy the action and recognise and make meaning of what they are seeing. My style of playing when I was younger meant I had to become relatively good at picking up people's strengths and weaknesses.

"One of the elements is to imagine different kinds of viewer sitting next to me – the layman and the table tennis aficionado – and convey what I see in terms they would both understand and like."

It is far from a new experience for Table Tennis England Board member Colin, having started his commentary career in the 1990s.

"It all started for me because England won the rights to host the European Championships in 1994 and it was going to be held at the National Indoor Arena," he said.

"It was going to be a showcase event. Richard Yule and Alan Ransome knew me and knew that I had some presentation skills and they groomed me for it. And as a full-time regional development officer for the ETTA, I didn't cost them anything!

"The job was arena commentator and was shared by me and Ian Marshall. We shared 14 hours a day for 11 days, live arena commentary for up to 5,000 people.

"When the World Championship came to Manchester in 1997, I was asked to do TV studio analysis on Sky TV. I was sat in Chiswick (Sky studios) – although the viewers would think we were in Manchester.

"My role was to try to help the audience know what was going on and it was either live or unedited, so it was a bit of a baptism of fire, but it stood me in good stead."

Colin, who also commentated on the World Championship of Ping Pong, always reviews his performance after the event. He added: "I always watch it back to reflect on what went well and how I could have made it better.

"I'm really aware of one of Des Lynam's quotes. He was told by a viewer that when he commentated on football

it was like he was on the sofa next to him. Des replied that it had taken him 17 years to make it look as if anybody could do it.”

Not that that is any guarantee of a faultless display – Colin freely admits he has made the odd howler.

“I said during Euro 94 that ‘Belgium have beaten Hungary, so Hungary go through to the semi-finals’. And I said ‘In the final of the men’s team event, Sweden have to be favourites, but chance have a France.’

“I know there’s likely to be a howler or two, but I care about the sport and the viewer, so I want to make it good.

“It will be hard work but rewarding.”

The Heritage Oil Open gets under way on Saturday July 5 at K2 in Crawley. The semi-finals and finals will be at the BT Sport Studio in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park on Monday July 7th from 5pm. The final stages will be recorded for broadcast from 9pm–11pm on Saturday July 12th on BT Sport.

Spectating at the BT Sport studio is fully booked, but spectators are welcome free of charge at K2.

**By Paul Stimpson (June 27th, 2014)**

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