

Kelly's eye is on more TV coverage after BT Sport debut

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Presenters Dan Lobb and Kelly Skeggs. Picture courtesy of Michael Loveder

Kelly Skeggs is hoping BT Sport's coverage of the Heritage Oil Open will be just the start of a television love affair with table tennis.

The Table Tennis England director, a former top-10 Cadet and Junior player and currently No 25 in the English Senior rankings, was part of the presenting team in front of the cameras on Monday.

She joined former Daybreak presenter Dan Lobb to front the show, which will be broadcast on BT Sport from 9-11pm on Saturday 12th July (with repeats at 1.15pm on Monday 14th, 4am on Tuesday 15th and 10am on Thursday 17th).

"They wanted some female involvement, someone who could give an expert opinion but not necessarily a presenter," she explained. "It's a first for me, but I've loved every minute of it.

"The opportunity this presents for our sport is huge – to showcase the very best table tennis on TV will enable our top talent to be seen by the rest of the country. The opportunities are endless.

"Table tennis is fast becoming the recreational sport of choice and if BT decide to capitalise on its popularity and broadcast it on a more frequent basis then this may attract substantial sponsorship, bringing more money into the sport and will get the players the coverage they deserve."

Having not been involved in broadcasting before, Kelly returned early from a holiday to attend the earlier rounds of the event at the K2 in Crawley to get a feel for what is involved and to interview some of the players on camera.

"They wanted to see how I fared in front of the camera and for me to get used to the environment before Monday's filming," she said.

"For the finals, I was sent a draft script and an outline of what was going to happen. This gave me the general gist but when Dan and I spoke he wanted to adapt a lot of it anyway."

She then refined the script and rehearsed with Dan before going in front of the cameras for real to film links before, during and after each semi-final and final match.

"Dan is a true professional and a highly regarded presenter. He's helped me endlessly, explaining everything to me and going through what we were going to say beforehand. He's a delight to work with," said Kelly.

Dan, who has previously presented table tennis on Sky, seconds Kelly's view that this could be the beginning of something big for table tennis.

"I think it's had a raw deal over the years, because it does lend itself well to TV – it seems unfair that it's been overlooked," he said.

"It's good to see it back on TV and hopefully shown in a way that showcases a sport that's fast and dynamic.

"We've got some good players in this country and it's quite unique to have a sports event actually in a TV studio. As far as a spectacle is concerned, it should be special.

"To have it self-contained makes it easier and smoother, you can focus more on camera positions. It's the little

extras that make the difference, which you can't have with a traditional outside broadcast.

"With any luck it will lead to more and more table tennis on TV. It deserves it."

And Dan also believes his co-presenter has a broadcasting career ahead of her, alongside her work as a football lawyer.

"Kelly is obviously very passionate about the sport and has been playing at a high level herself, she's a natural in front of the camera and seems to be the perfect person to help drive it forward," he said.

By Paul Stimpson (July 9th, 2014)

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