

No question about it – Kelly's excited for Baku

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Posted On: June 09, 2015

What would your reaction be if someone asked whether you would prefer to own an elephant-sized cat or a cat-sized elephant?

Kelly Sibley was faced with exactly that poser when she sat on the Team GB couch for a video interview during the kitting out day for the European Games, which start in Baku this week.

For the record, she went for the cat-sized elephant. "I thought it would be a bit cuter – and an elephant-sized cat seemed a bit scary!" she said.

"Some of the questions were a bit bizarre, but it's good fun. You do interviews all the time and you get into the zone, so it's quite nice to be asked something different."

Sibley admits to having a few butterflies in her stomach as she prepares to represent Team GB at the inaugural Games.

The 27-year-old Leamington player said: "It's exciting. When you pull up in the car and you see the signs for Team GB and the Olympic rings, you get butterflies in your stomach a bit.

"Receiving your kit and trying it on is really exciting and makes it seem real and that it's not far away."

 Sibley is relishing being a part of that first GB team to compete in the Games, which feature 20 sports in total.

"To have another multi-sport event is great," she said. "It's good for table tennis to be part of that and get publicity for the sport and to be part of the first games and part of history is really exciting.

"Hopefully it takes off. The next one is in Holland (in four years' time) and hopefully it keeps improving and carries on.

"I've never been to Azerbaijan before and I don't know much about it but we've seen a couple of videos made by Team GB and it looks nice. It's a new country to add to my list – I've pretty much covered most of Europe."

Sibley, who plays professionally in France, won her fifth National singles title in March and has the added incentive of the singles winner in Baku receiving an automatic place at the Rio Olympics.

And while she admitted that would be a tall order, she added: "Obviously, you want to do as well as you can and to win that place at Rio is the dream.

"I just want to carry on how I've been performing – I've had a good season in France and had five or six wins against opponents ranked 80-150.

"Winning the Nationals as well, I felt I performed well there and I want to carry that form into the games.

"If I can get past the first few rounds and see what happens. I think I can challenge the best players in Europe. If I focus on what I need to do and play my best, anything can happen."

Her Commonwealth Games experience in Glasgow last summer, where she won mixed doubles bronze alongside Danny Reed, is something Sibley can draw on for inspiration.

"The bronze medal match was obviously the biggest I've ever played," she said. "I've experienced it in a good way and also in a bad way, with Jo (Drinkhall) in the Women's Doubles, so I know what it's like to finish fourth. Hopefully I can use that experience from Glasgow – it gave me massive confidence in myself – and I can draw on that."

Tomorrow – read the views of Liam Pitchford & Alan Cooke

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