



THE MAN BEHIND THE MIKE

You might not know the name, but you'll definitely recognise the voice. SBS football commentator Martin Tyler talks about his life behind the microphone

Why European Championships covered? How has the tournament evolved since your first one?

It'll be my ninth European Championship. The tournament has grown steadily. In 1976, my first, there were eight finalists. It moved up to eight in 1980, stayed that way until Euro 96. In 1996, 16 countries, all of whom can't play together, it is a very intense and competitive tournament.

Why your first European Championship match? Who was more important to you or the players?

My first European Championship match was as a substitute! In 1976 I was in the studio supervising the editing for the match of Czechoslovakia vs Holland. I went to extra-time at which point I was one of the employers at the time, lost my job from the stadium. As I had some broadcasting experience, very limited in that I was asked to call the extra-time off the air in the studio. There were a lot of goals and sendings off. It was very intense but I got through it really because I didn't have time to be worried.

How do you watch a game without talking?

I go to "scout" teams before the game to state on games, and watch in deep concentration, and silence!

Does your wife enjoy watching football?

Not at all, although we met at the 1982 World Cup Finals – she was working as an interpreter.

Who will you be barracking for in the European Championship? Is it difficult to hide your bias when commentating?

I hope I never show any bias. I love the game itself and the most I can say is that I hope the side which deserves to win in each match does so, but as we know that is not always the case.

What has been your all-time greatest Euro moment?

There have been so many but I particularly enjoyed seeing Michel Platini score hat-tricks in consecutive games for France in Euro 84.

Who is the finest European player you've been lucky enough to see?

Platini was a sensation in 1984 and I would put him alongside Marco van Basten, the great Dutch striker, who scored three goals against England in Euro 88, and then struck that fabulous volley in the final. I was lucky to spend a lot of that tournament with a great Dutch team including being invited into their dressing room after their semi-final win over the hosts, West Germany. The celebrations were fantastic.

Which player is the most fun to commentate about? Who is the player best to watch?

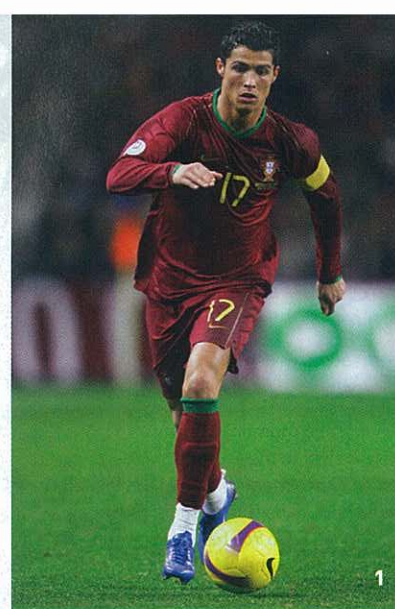
All commentators love expressive players like Paul Gascoigne, a star for England's tilt at Euro glory in 1996. At the moment Cristiano Ronaldo, who also wears his heart on his sleeve. He is in unbelievable form for Manchester United, and will want to carry that on in this tournament for Portugal.

How would Australia fare in Europe? Which Australian players belong in a competition of this calibre?

All the top Socceroos would cope well in this sort of tournament as was shown in the World Cup in 2006. I was surprised that more recently they didn't make a bigger impression in the Asian competition but I'm sure they will soon.

What did you think of the FA's plan to take the Premier League global? Would Australia have benefited from hosting an EPL match?

I didn't reject it out of hand like many observers. I think we should always be looking for innovation. I have been lucky to travel the world in my job, and therefore have seen at first hand the passion for the Premier League. I think it would be a success in Australia but only as a proper game. Aussie fans know their sport and can



1 Cristiano Ronaldo 2 In the hotseat 3 World Cup 82: a great place to meet your wife 4 Marco van Basten 5 Tyler: Premiership Commentator of the Decade



6 The expressive Paul Gascoigne 7 France: champs in '84 8 Platini, the star of Euro 84 9 '85 vintage Tyler 10 Fabio Capello: the man to rescue England?



tell the difference between a fake and the real thing.

Why did England miss out on Euro 08?

The same problem as in the World Cup Finals of 2006: a group of talented individuals did not blend well enough as a team. The intensity of domestic competition in England does drain the players. Even so they were on the verge of qualifying until the Croatian third goal at Wembley struck a fatal blow.

How would you go as England coach?

I do coach but I know my limitations. I have been lucky enough to commentate on over 200 England games. That's the nearest I ever get to the team!

Who will win Euro 08?

What I like about the European Championships is that they are very hard to predict. Who would have thought that Greece would end up on top four years ago? I am just pleased to be going again for SBS, and let's watch it unfold together. ◊



11 England crashes out of Euro 08 12 Greece shocks Europe in 2004

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