

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: *A Question Of Sport's Phil Tufnell*

**The prized possession you value above all others...**

A silver St Christopher medallion my mum Sylvia gave me when I was 14. I didn't know at the time but she was very ill with leukaemia and it was to keep me safe. It's been all over the world with me since. Mum died when I was 16.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...**

Never scoring a century for England. My best was 22 against India in 1993. I was a genuine No 11 batsman – not very good and a bit scared!

**The temptation you wish you could resist...**

I've been smoking since I was 16 and I've tried everything to give up. I wish the desire to smoke was never in my mind.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...**

Jaws by Peter Benchley. I read it aged 12 and it ruined holidays for the rest of my life!

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...**

I'd hitch a ride on a golden eagle and soar over mountains.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...**

Traffic jams drive me mad – I've lost weeks of my life sitting on the M25.

Right: The actor Oliver Reed. Above right: paints and paintbrushes. Far right: the Jade Mountain Hotel, St Lucia

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...**

Painting. I love to splash paint about and make abstract pictures. I find it very therapeutic because I totally lose myself.

**The film you can watch time and time again...**

Pulp Fiction. The story is nuts, the cast is amazing and the soundtrack is brilliant. The dance scene with John Travolta and Uma Thurman is a classic.

**The person who has influenced you most...**

I couldn't choose between my mum and my dad Alan. They gave me so much support, which ultimately led me to play cricket for my country.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...**

The actor Oliver Reed. He was such a hellraiser that I reckon a pint with him would end up being an all-nighter.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...**

Enjoy life to the full – it'll be over in a flash.



'My dad used to say, "Son, you've got the stamina of a carthorse and the speed of a gazelle." By the time I was 20 I'd lost both'

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...**

When I was a kid my dad used to say, 'Son, you've got the stamina of a carthorse and the speed of a gazelle.' By the time I was 20 I'd lost both.

**The unending quest that drives you on...**

To stay happy. I've had two divorces and some sad times, so now I focus on the simpler things in life.

**The poem that touches your soul...**

If by Rudyard Kipling. It's a good mantra for doing your best in life.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...**

That I was a party boy who didn't take cricket seriously. I gave my all to win, but if we lost my view was that there was no point sulking. Get out and have a beer! People mistook my smiling for not caring.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...**

Meeting my wife Dawn in 2001. She's mellowed me out and made me happier.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...**

I'd steal Van Gogh's Sunflowers from the National Gallery in London and put it in our downstairs loo.

**The song that means most to you...**

Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You, the version by Lauryn Hill. It was the first dance at our wedding in 2005. This sounds mushy, but Dawn's the most kind and honest person you could meet.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...**

I'd kick off with a champagne breakfast at the Jade Mountain Hotel in St Lucia with Dawn, then swim in the Blue Lagoon in Jamaica with my kids [Ellie, 24, and Poppy, 18, both from previous relationships, and stepdaughter Alana, also 18]. Lunch would be a seafood platter by Sydney Harbour with some cold white wine. After that, I'd watch England win The Ashes at the Sydney Cricket Ground, then celebrate with my mates at the Kingswood Arms, my local pub in Surrey. Dawn and I would have dinner at The Cliff in Barbados. We'd have champagne and then the special of the day with some red wine. I'd end the day by taking all my friends and family to Las Vegas. We'd hit some bars on the Strip, do

some gambling and see a show. After all that I'd crash out at home. When you've travelled as much as I have, there's no place better than your own bed.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** When I was selected for England for the first time in 1990. It was the realisation of a dream.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** My mum passing away when I was 16. She was very strong, but she was eaten away by leukaemia, which was horrible to witness. Losing your mum at that age is very hard and I went off the rails for a while. It took me a long time to sort myself out, but my dad was amazing and got me through it.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** Never winning The Ashes – the Aussies are the old enemy, so my career always feels a bit hollow. I'd also like to play a baddie in a movie.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Keep smiling as long as you can.

**The order of service at your funeral...**

They can bring me in to The Joker by the Steve Miller Band, then play the Test Match Special theme music and take me out to Party All The Time by The Black Eyed Peas.

**The way you want to be remembered...** He was always a good laugh.

**The Plug...** Buy tickets for The Phil Tufnell Sky Terrace Experience, the VIP seating & hospitality area he hosts at the Kia Oval, for England vs Pakistan from 11-13 August at thisisparagon.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: BBC/GUY LEVY, REX, ALAMY

## PS...

*Tilda Swinton teams up with George Clooney in 50s-set comedy Hail, Caesar! – in cinemas from Friday. Martin Shaw stars in Hobson's Choice at Bath's Theatre Royal until next Saturday. And The Strangers' new tour kicks off in Perth on Thursday*



## NEXT WEEK

- Tom Hollander and Rebecca Front tell all about Julian Fellowes' adaptation of Victorian melodrama Doctor Thorne
- Monty Don on the elusive apricot rose
- PLUS Britain's most detailed TV listings