

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's Grand National winner Bob Champion

The prized possession you value above all others... My Helen Rollason award, which I got at the BBC Sports Personality Of The Year awards in 2011 for my charity work. The Bob Champion Cancer Trust has raised more than £14 million since 1983 and that award meant more to me than anything.

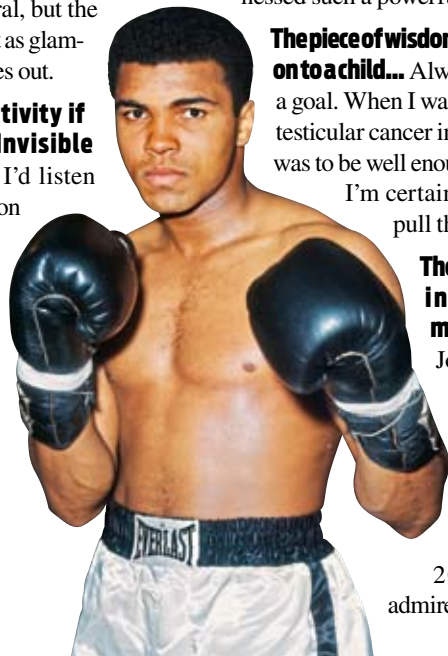
The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not winning the Cheltenham Gold Cup. After the Grand National, it's the jewel all jockeys want to win.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Fry's Turkish Delight. I eat pretty healthily, but I have a sweet tooth and I find them too moreish.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... I love Dick Francis's thrillers in general, but the racing world isn't as glamorous as he makes out.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd listen to David Cameron talking to his closest friends to find out what he *really* thinks about Boris Johnson and Michael Gove.

Right: the late Muhammad Ali. Above right: a fruit platter. Far right: Roseberry Topping hill



The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase..... That I only won one race! I rode 500-plus winners.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Litter. I'd like to see prisoners clearing it up so they're not sitting around all day.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... I'd like to be in Muhammad Ali's corner when he fought George Foreman in The Rumble in the Jungle in 1974. I saw him at the Sports Personality Of The Year once and I've never witnessed such a powerful aura.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Always give yourself a goal. When I was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 1979 my dream was to be well enough to ride again. I'm certain that helped me pull through.

The person who has influenced you most... The trainer Josh Gifford. We won the Grand National with Aldaniti. He stood by me, and I was sad when he died in 2012 because I admired him so much.



The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... I'd like to have

good knees again! I'm 68 and arthritis and old injuries hurt. Like every jockey, I was battered. I broke my collarbone eight times, and had breaks in my back, shoulders, skull, legs, arms, ankles. You name it, I broke it!

The film you can watch time and time again... The Magnificent Seven. I saw it four times at the cinema as a kid. I liked Yul Brynner best as he was so hard.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... Winning the Monaco Grand Prix for Ferrari would be fun, but a bit unlikely now!

The philosophy that underpins your life... You're only as good as your last race has always been my mantra.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Fashion! You might not think that, seeing the way I dress, but I take note of the latest trends.

The unending quest that drives you on... For my charity to open more cancer research laboratories. We have two so far and we keep working to improve detection methods and treatment.



'Like every jockey, I was battered. I broke my collarbone eight times, my back, my skull, legs, arms, ankles – you name it, I broke it'

I'd spend the afternoon at Flemington Racecourse for the Melbourne Cup and in the evening my kids – Michael, 31, and Henrietta, 27 – would join us on a beach in Tahiti for a fish barbecue and champagne. I'd end the day at home in Newmarket with a glass of brandy.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a Ferrari and zoom along the A14 to Newmarket without getting a ticket.

The song that means most to you... Sailing by Rod Stewart. It always puts me in a good frame of mind.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Winning the National at my ninth attempt was an amazing sensation.

The saddest time that shook your world... Losing both parents to cancer – my dad Bob in 1985 aged 75 and my mum Phyllis in 2010 aged 90 – was very sad. They meant the world to me.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd be brought into the church to the theme music from Champions, the film about my life with John Hurt, and taken out to We Are The Champions by Queen. I want my ashes scattered with my mum and dad's.

The way you want to be remembered... A nice fella and a decent jockey whose charity helped find a breakthrough to cure cancer.

The Plug... Please support The Bob Champion Cancer Trust by donating via www.bobchampion.org.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

The poem that touches your soul... Home-Thoughts, From Abroad by Robert Browning. It's a beautiful poem about England in spring.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being diagnosed with cancer and given four or five months to live was a shock. I was offered a new type of chemo with only a 30 per cent chance of success. I wasn't sure what to do, but then the doctor said, 'If you were given a 6-4 shot to ride, you'd give it a go, wouldn't you?' The chemo was brutal, but it worked. I still have yearly check-ups.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd spend all day with my partner Jeanette. We'd have a big platter of tropical fruit for breakfast on a beach in Hawaii, then I'd do a bit of bodyboarding. After that we'd go for a long walk up the Roseberry Topping hill near Middlesbrough. My mum and dad's ashes are scattered up there, so I'd stop and say hello to them. Later, I'd zip to Hong Kong to get a suit made.



PS...

Mark Rylance is Roald Dahl's BFG in the new film – in cinemas from Friday. Beverley Knight stars in The Bodyguard at London's Dominion Theatre from Thursday. And the Pet Shop Boys play four nights at the Royal Opera House from Wednesday



NEXT WEEK

● Vicky McClure takes us backstage on her new thriller The Secret Agent ● Delicious summer dishes in part three of our Elizabeth David recipe series ● PLUS Britain's best TV guide