

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's ex-England rugby player Ben Cohen

**The prized possession you value above all others...** I'm not at all materialistic and the only things I truly cherish are my three children – my ten-year-old twin girls Harriette and Isabelle [with his ex-wife Abby] and one-year-old Mila [with his girlfriend Kristina Rihanoff, his partner on Strictly Come Dancing in 2013].

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** As a professional sportsman, you learn not to have regrets. You need to be ruthless and look forward.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Coffee. Every day I have two large black Americanos, which is four shots of espresso. Way too much.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** I love the Millennium trilogy of crime novels by Stieg Larsson, including *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd follow the Queen and Prince Charles around to see if they ever talk about the succession.

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

Wayne Smith, my coach at Northampton Saints, who was there for me at my darkest hour. My dad was killed in 2000 [Peter Cohen, 58, was seriously injured in an attack at a nightclub and died a month later]. Wayne helped me channel my anger and pain from his death into rugby.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** *Oliver!* I first saw it when I was little and loved all the songs.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Slow drivers, especially in rush hour. They clog up the road, and I think they're just as dangerous as someone who's speeding.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** I'd love to have a beer with my dad and chew the fat.



**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Have good manners, show respect and look someone in the eye when you talk to them.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Flying helicopters. I learned in 2007, but I don't get to fly too often because I'm so busy.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** My hearing. I've suffered from tinnitus all my life and constantly have a screaming noise in my ears. I'd love to experience peace and quiet, or listen to the birds singing, but I only have 46 per cent hearing. The upside is that I'm England's second-highest try scorer – mainly because I couldn't hear other players shouting for the ball, so I didn't pass much!

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To make a positive difference with everything I do.

**The poem that touches your soul...** Sorry, but poetry doesn't do it for me, so I don't have one.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm rude because I walk past people or ignore them. It's because I'm deaf.



'I scored lots of tries because, as I'm deaf, I couldn't hear team-mates shout for the ball, so I didn't pass much!'

on all the rides, then I'd have dinner with Kristina in the restaurant up the Eiffel Tower. I'd have snails and foie gras, followed by steak with a few glasses of pinot noir. Kristina and I would end the day in a chalet at Soho Farmhouse in Oxfordshire.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** Winning the World Cup in Australia in 2003. Nothing prepares you for achieving the ultimate in your sphere, so it was a very weird feeling.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** Losing my dad still hurts. I think of him every day.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To emulate my success in sport in business, probably in the leisure industry.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Prove people wrong.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'm fed up with being sad at funerals, so I just want people to mourn for 20 minutes, then have a party. I'll be buried next to my dad – I bought a plot by him for our family when he died.

**The way you want to be remembered...** As a loving father, a kind friend, and as someone who had fun.

**The Plug...** The Ben Cohen StandUp Foundation is dedicated to eradicating bullying. Its annual fundraising and awards event is in London on 28 June. Book tickets via <https://fourth-annual-fundraising-dinner-awards-ceremony.eventbrite.co.uk>. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



Left: a scene from *Oliver!*. Above: grapes and wine. Right: Times Square in New York



PS...

Lily James stars in *The Guernsey Literary And Potato Peel Pie Society* – in cinemas Friday. *Nashville In Concert* begins its

UK tour in Birmingham today. And *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical* opens at London's Aldwych Theatre on Tuesday



**NEXT WEEK**

- In the final instalment of our stunning series *The Rise And Rise Of Meghan*, we reveal why her first marriage failed ●
- Monty Don on how to create the perfect patio ● PLUS
- Britain's best TV guide