

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: former England rugby captain Will Carling



The prized possession you value above all others... My England cap, which I got in January 1988 when I made my debut at 22. It had been my dream to play for England since I was six.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not handling myself better while I was England captain [from November 1988-1996]. I wasn't sensitive enough to other people, winning was No.1 in my life. I wasn't a very likeable person then, but I'm different now.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Rudeness to waiters. Some people issue orders to staff like they don't exist.

The priority activity if you were the invisible man for a day... I'd sit in on a conversation between Obama and David Cameron to see if Cameron is a poodle.

Right: Martin Freeman as Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*. Above right: Eton mess. Far right: An elephant in Kruger National Park



The temptation you wish you could resist... Puddings... Eton mess, pavlova, cherry pie, anything with double cream.

The film you can watch time and time again... Monty Python's *Life Of Brian*, it still makes me laugh even now. I know John Cleese, he can be serious, but then he'll come out with something totally Monty Python and crack you up.

The person who has influenced you most... My wife Lisa. She's taught me what's important in life, which is not some stupid game but our family [Will and Lisa have two children, Jack, 14, and Mimi, 12, Will has a son from a previous relationship and Lisa has two children from a previous marriage].

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... A positive attitude will make things happen for the better.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien. It was the first serious book I read when I was 11. I loved the bravery of this normal guy, Bilbo Baggins, who could do extraordinary things.



The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Nelson Mandela. I met him in 1994 during a tour. I'd love to ask him how he forgave the people who imprisoned him.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The simplicity and honesty of childhood.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Cycling. I'm obsessed with it and clock up about 250km a week. I analyse all kinds of stats and love talking about kit. I'm 49 and I've become a Middle-Aged Man In Lycra – it's sad, but I can't help it!

The unending quest that drives you on... To push myself to my limits in everything I do. Even if it's learning to cook roast beef to medium rare, I'll practise until I've mastered it – which I have!

The poem that touches your soul... I love a speech by Theodore Roosevelt from 1910. He talks about the man who tries but fails 'while daring greatly'.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... I'm shy and

people take that as me being standoffish, but then they meet me and say, 'I expected you to be really arrogant!'

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being made England captain. It brought so many tricky issues, but also immense pride.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a diamond necklace for Lisa.

The song that means most to you... What A Wonderful World by Louis Armstrong. His voice is amazing.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd start with breakfast at a New York diner with Lisa and all our kids. I'd have eggs and bacon and lots of coffee. Then we'd go on The Beast Speed Boat Ride to the Statue of Liberty, which is hilarious. It's run by a guy called Crazy Horse who soaks everyone with water guns. We'd hang out in Manhattan for the morning, then have lunch in the backstreets of Rome: tomato and mozzarella salad, spaghetti with meatballs and a glass of Malbec for me. We'd then have ice cream and tour the sights in horse-drawn carriages. In the afternoon, we'd go on a game drive in the Kruger

National Park in South Africa. We'd stay at Londolozi safari lodge and have medium rare beef for dinner while watching the animals. I'd end the day at a rooftop bar in London's West End before crashing out at home in Berkshire.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Taking all the kids to Twickenham on a private visit last year. It's a place that means so much to me, but that was the loveliest time I've had there.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my mum Pam died of cancer in 2003 aged 65. I went to boarding school at seven and we were never close. When she died I was mourning for the relationship we'd never had.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To be as good a dad as possible. I have a long way to go.

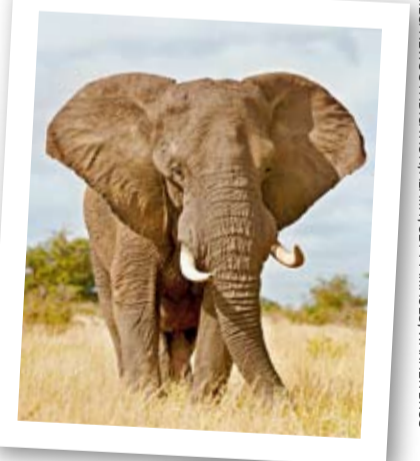
The philosophy that underpins your life... Just have a go.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd like I Vow To Thee My Country, but I want the service to be short so people can start drinking heavily!

The way you want to be remembered... With love by my family for being a proud dad and a good husband.

The Plug... Will Carling organises hospitality days at rugby internationals and bespoke cycling events. Visit wcm ltd.com and thepack.uk.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Spider-Man star Emma Stone and Joaquin Phoenix take the leads in Woody Allen's Irrational Man – in cinemas Friday. Charlotte Brontë's masterpiece Jane Eyre is at the National Theatre from Tuesday. And Leona Lewis's new album I Am is out on Friday



NEXT WEEK

- Read a taunting note from Jack the Ripper in part two of our series on the history of crime
- Ian McNeice takes us backstage on Doc Martin
- Simple everyday recipes from Tom Kerridge's new book
- PLUS Britain's most detailed TV guide