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 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 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 misapprehension about yourself that makes your hackles rise... Readiness to waiters. Some people issue orders to staff like they don’t exist.

The philosophy that underpins your life... A positive attitude will win the day. I analyse all kinds of stats and figures but fails ‘while daring greatly’.

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 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 way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I’d start with breakfast at a New York diner 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 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 unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To be as good a dad as possible. I have a long way to go.

The unending quest that drives you on... Cycling. I’m obsessed with cycling now. I’m 49 and I’ve become a Middle-Aged Man In Lycra. It’s sad but I can’t help it!

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

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

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... Rude to a waiter. Some people treat staff as if they’re not human.

The way you want to be remembered... As told to Rob McGibbon

The looking-glass world of your[::-2] childhood... It was a Mad Hatter’s tea party. One day I’d wear a middle-aged man in lycra. The next, I’d be in a middle-aged woman in码

The cry for help that makes you want to RUN away... If people take that as me being standoffish, then they are wrong. I expect you to be really arrogant!

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.