



'I'd love my own quiz show. When I hosted a Mastermind special in 1978 I was told I had a great future – but nothing happened!'

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: football commentator John Motson*

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Always take a positive from a negative. Jimmy Hill taught me that.  
**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Business. I've no idea how it works. I meet people who say they're a 'non executive director' and do very little for a salary. Sounds good to me!  
**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** The ability to play football. I enjoyed it immensely and will never have that pleasure again.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** Never letting my work standards slip, and therefore giving the younger commentators a run for their money.  
**The poem that touches your soul...** William Wordsworth's Daffodils. One of my few regrets is I've never really been the type to stop and stare. I put too much effort into my job to ever stop.  
**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm a Tottenham Hotspur fan!

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My collection of football programmes. I've got every FA Cup Final programme since 1921 and all the England World Cup ones. They represent my 60-year passion for the game.

**The unqualified regret you wish you could amend...** Never having had the thrill of commentating on England playing in a major final.

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

I'd wake up at the Dormy House hotel at Broadway in the Cotswolds and go for a four-mile run. Then lunch at Oslo Court in London's St John's Wood: smoked salmon and scrambled eggs, followed by a meat dish with red wine. After that, a match at my local football club, Barnet, with my 26-year-old son Fred. Then a cream tea at the Landmark Hotel in Marylebone, washed down with champagne in its Mirror Bar. Finally, a slap-up dinner at The George of Stamford Hotel, off the A1 in Lincolnshire.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Snacking on bread and cheese while on the road – which is why I'm normally a stone overweight at the end of each football season.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** The Power Of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale. I left school feeling inferior because I was the smallest in the class and not great at sport. The book inspired me and helped me as a cub newspaper reporter.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd drive a black London taxi for the day. For years I thought I'd do that job if the commentating didn't work out.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Email! It's spoilt the art of conversation. I'm a dinosaur about technology, I can only go as far as texting.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Scent Of A Woman with Al Pacino. People think I'm a very serious person but it really makes me laugh.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My wife Anne. She's kept my feet on the ground. We're a team and I couldn't cope without her.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Herbert Chapman, Arsenal's hugely influential manager in the Twenties. He made football more professional. I'd love to tell him how he helped make the game what it is today.



From top: The Dormy House Hotel, a London taxi, an FA Cup Final programme, Scent Of A Woman, Herbert Chapman, a cream tea, a sheepskin coat and the beach at Bournemouth



**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** When Hereford United beat Newcastle 2-1 in the FA Cup on 5 February, 1972. It was a classic game and it changed my life because my boss on Match Of The Day realised I could be trusted to commentate on a big match.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd burn down a pub near where I live in Hertfordshire. It's on a busy crossroads and causes no end of traffic problems.

**The song that means most to you...** Kirsty MacColl's He's On The Beach because I always associate it with Bournemouth. We have a flat there and it's my little sanctuary.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** The day in 1971 when I got my first contract on Match Of The Day. To be hired by a show that was getting 10 million viewers was mind-blowing.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** The bombings in London on 7 July, 2005. For it to happen in the city I love really saddened me. The memory still makes my blood run cold.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To be a quiz show host. I was the questioner on a Mastermind special for the 1978 FA Cup Final and a lady who worked for Magnus Magnusson said I had a great future doing that, but nothing ever happened!

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Never be late. My mother instilled punctuality in me. I'm a real nuisance because I'm always the guy who's there early, standing in empty rooms.

**The order of service at your funeral...** My father was a Methodist minister so I suppose I'll have a small service in a Methodist church. But I'm only 66 and I hope I'm still fit enough to go on for many more years.

**The way you want to be remembered...** As a decent broadcaster. And for championing sheepskin coats for 40 years!

**The Plug...** Motty is part of the BBC team on television and radio during the European Championships until 1 July.

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

*Catherine Zeta Jones and Tom Cruise bring glam metal musical Rock Of Ages to the big screen on Wednesday. Julie Walters returns to the National Theatre in The Last Of The Haussmans. And catch Elton John before the British leg of his tour ends on 16 June*



**NEXT WEEK**

- David Tennant, Billie Piper and Jane Horrocks head the cast in a new BBC1 season of love stories
- MasterChef winner Thomasina Miers' modern Mexican classics
- Part One of Jamie Oliver's Summer Salads series
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide