

JONATHAN AGNEW



I am highly jealous of my Waitrose Weekend colleague, Eleanor Oldroyd, who is in Sochi to cover the Winter Olympics for BBC Radio.

It is a wonderful event, of course, and also a huge challenge for broadcasters who have to commentate on all manner of weird

and wonderful sports of which they have no personal experience.

Preparation is key, but as I discovered while working on the archery at London 2012, you really need your wits about you when venturing into the unknown. The familiar pattern of your specialist sport is no longer there and neither are the fall-back disciplines such as reading out the bowling figures that can help get you through a quiet over in a Test match.

Surprisingly, perhaps, I have cut my teeth in winter sports.

Between cricket seasons in my playing days, the now defunct *Today* newspaper sent me into the Alps to report on the British skiing team. There I found myself writing about aerial skiing and moguls – and filed my first, and almost certainly only exclusive when I stumbled upon the four times world champion and Olympic gold medallist Pirmin Zurbriggen in a bar in Tignes.

For some reason he revealed to me that he was about to announce his retirement from the dangerous world of downhill at the age of 27 because his nerve had gone.

It made for a good, if unlikely

story, and Zurbriggen now runs a hotel in Saas-Almagell.

Eleanor will have been researching slopestyle, skeleton and curling for months and this week my work begins on Rio 2016 where my specialist sport will be equestrianism.

“But you can’t ride, Aggers!” I hear you shout. Indeed I can’t and never really wanted to. But my wife does and she has a horse. So into a windswept barn we will go and

my foray into the weird and wonderful world of dressage will begin in earnest. As was the case with the archers, the British Equestrian Federation has given me a friendly welcome and I am already very excited about the prospect of commentating

on Charlotte Dujardin and the amazing ‘dancing horses’ (I promise never to use that term again).

From this starting point it will be a long journey, which includes getting to grips with showjumping, cross-country and many hours of wrestling with flying changes, piaffes and pirouettes. It is also going to be fun and I’ll keep you posted!

‘I am very excited about the dancing horses’

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