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VICKY TAYLOR

*Every contact leaves a trace*

PHILIPPA HANNA

*Singing His praises*

CHARLOTTE GAMBILL

*Take a hike!*

JANE SMITH

*You are what you don't eat*

AMY BOUCHER PYE  
*God-infused glasses*

Christine Ohuruogu

Shrugging off the drugs ban

+  
KILLY JOHN  
SUE RINALDI  
SARAH SMITH  
HEIKE PRENTICE  
CATHY MADAVAN  
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CHRISTINE OHURUOGU

LET THE  
GAMES BEGIN

BY STUART WEIR

Christine Ohuruogu grew up within a stone's throw of the Olympic Stadium where she expects to compete this summer. In 2005-6 she missed three out-of-competition drug tests and received a one-year ban for missing them. The ban expired in August 2007 and she returned to competition immediately, winning gold at the 2007 World Championships.

The British Olympic Association imposed a lifetime ban excluding her from competing at future Olympic Games for Great Britain, but Ohuruogu appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport and the Olympic ban was finally overturned in November 2007. She won gold in the 2008 Olympic Games and there has never been any suggestion that she actually used any banned substances.

Ohuruogu was recently described by *The Times* as "the embodiment of the vibrant, multicultural bid for London 2012". Stuart Weir, who watched Christine win her Olympic Gold and run in three World Championships, had the privilege of speaking to her ahead of the London Games.

IS IT TRUE THAT YOU COULD HAVE BEEN A NETBALLER RATHER THAN GOING INTO ATHLETICS?

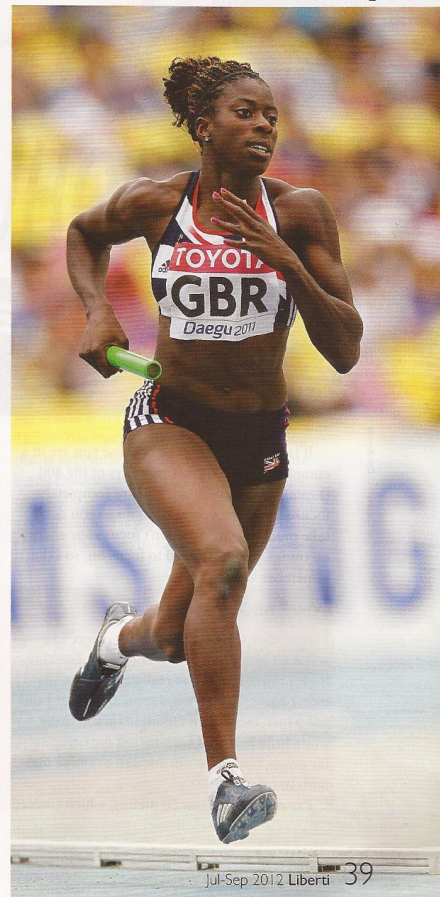
Yes, I played netball for England Under-17s and Under-19s. I wasn't just messing around, I took it very, very seriously. I knew that if I hung on for a bit, I would definitely make the England senior team. When I decided to switch to athletics, it was a hard phone call to make to say that I wasn't coming back and that I had essentially given up international netball.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE 2008 OLYMPIC FINAL?

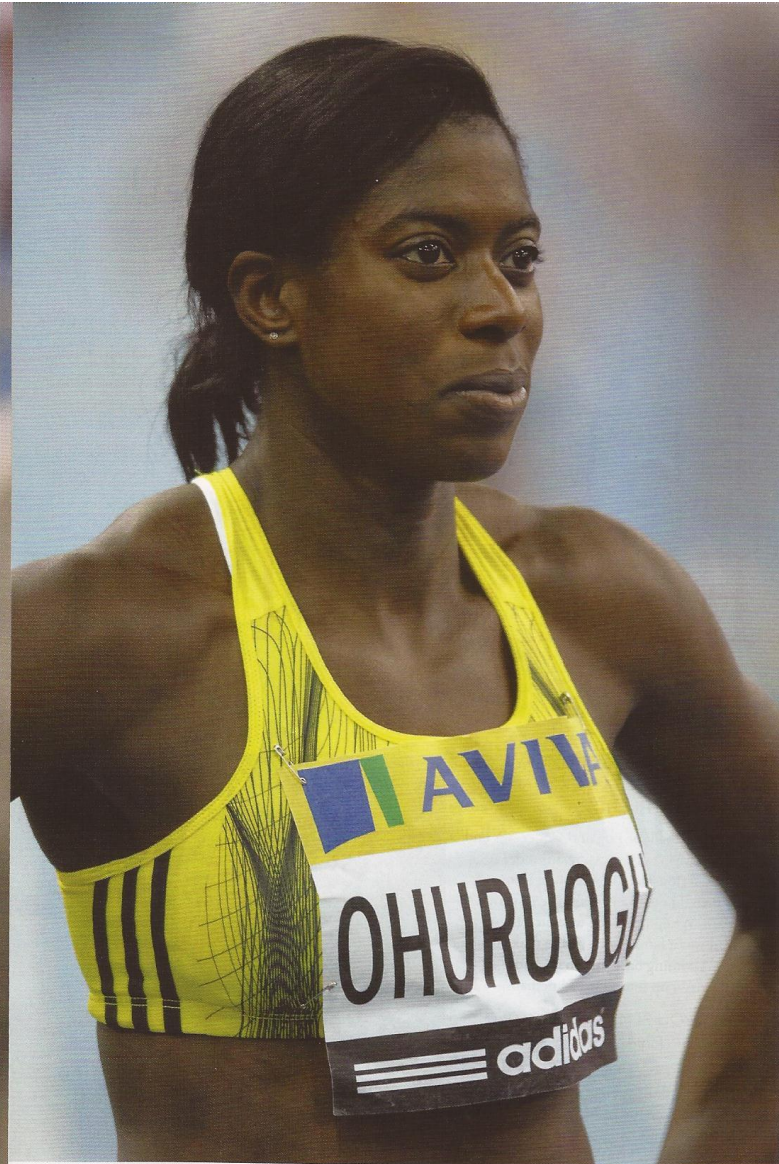
It's funny because I don't remember much; I honestly don't. I don't remember much of what was going on before the race. I remember walking down the 100 metre track towards my blocks and seeing my brothers. I remember thinking on another day we would have a laugh because they are always taking the mick out of me, my brothers. But they looked so serious.

I thought they were maybe going to smile to make me feel more comfortable, but they did not smile and were completely serious. That was nice that they were respecting that this was a difficult time for me and not a time for messing around.

'IN 2005-6 SHE MISSED THREE OUT-OF-COMPETITION DRUG TESTS AND RECEIVED A ONE-YEAR BAN FOR MISSING THEM.'



Imi Jackson



Colleague / Dan Rowley

It is a very strange time because you are in a complete bubble those three days of the 400 [heats, semi-final, final]. You are completely focused on what you need to do so you don't take much else in. You don't focus your energy on things you don't need to focus on, so I don't remember very much.

**WHAT ABOUT THE RACE?**

I remember the first 200 metres where I knew I was a bit behind but I did not panic. Looking back I think that it was really important that I didn't panic. I will always remember that I did not panic, even in an Olympic final. I think I was a little annoyed with myself for being so far down, but it was not enough to shake my faith in myself.

I remember the last 50 metres, which seemed

like forever. I remember running and overtaking Sanya Richards and thinking "Oh my gosh! What am I going to do when I cross the line?" I kind of knew at that point that I had won; it's like I'd seen it happen before. What happened was how I imagined it to happen in my head. I remember running and thinking, "This is actually coming true. What do I do when I finish?" You didn't really want it to finish because you weren't too sure how you were going to react.

**WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE WHEN YOU REALISED YOU WERE OLYMPIC CHAMPION?**

I think when I crossed the line it was more a kind of relief, it wasn't instant happiness; more relief it was over. It was nice to know that I had

done what I had been working towards for the last I don't know how long.

It was nice to say, "Today it's over, I'm done. No more 400s, it's over". I think that was the first thing that went through my head.

**LOOKING BACK, HOW DO YOU VIEW THE BAN?**

To be honest it does still bother me a lot. Not in the sense that I was upset by the whole thing, but knowing that I went through all that and I do ask myself, "How did I cope with all that? And what did I do?" I don't know how I managed to be honest, because it was really difficult.

I am very stunned at how I dealt with it and how I managed to turn things around. That gives me an enormous amount of strength now, knowing that I went through what was the hardest part of my career and I managed to come through. Really and truly I don't think anything I will ever experience will be as hard as that.

**CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE 'WHEREABOUTS' SYSTEM?**

The system that was in place at the time required that you gave to the 'whereabouts' authorities five one-hour slots in the week, ie an hour each day of the week and details of where you would be. For example "I will be at Lea Valley on Monday, 10-11am. Tuesday I will be at my house 5-6pm". That is essentially what we have to do. It was a complicated system, particularly for me, because at that time I had multiple training venues so it was a kind of roulette where I would be on any day and I had to remember to report any changes to what I had told previously them. The system has changed, so it isn't a problem any more

**HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH INJURY?**

Well 2009 was a difficult year for me anyway. It was difficult coming off the back of the Olympics. While winning is good, the repercussions of winning are very intense. Perhaps it should get easier, but for me it just got harder. Injury was the result of overwork and not enough rest and not looking after myself properly, so I really take responsibility for that.

In 2010 I got injured again, but that is just one of those things and it is upsetting when you have trained really hard and you think, 'I have done all this work. Why do I put myself through all this? Now I won't be able to display all the work I have done'. It does get upsetting.

But I do believe that there is a plan and sometimes it's not my time to go out and win medals. It's not my chance and I am not going to fight against it. And it gives you a sense of peace that there is something bigger out there. And it is nice to let the control be taken away from me and just let things be.

**WHAT ROLE DOES YOUR CHRISTIAN FAITH PLAY IN YOUR LIFE?**

It plays a huge role; it is what I hold onto. Sport is very fickle and when we rely on

## GOING FOR GOLD

a dining room, people are happy, people are crying, people are hurt. So much is going on that it can influence you and affect your mood. You see someone who lost who should have won and you ask, what if that happens to me?

But it is nice to have that safety net [of Jesus saying] "If you are worried, come to me and it will be all right".

### WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE LONDON OLYMPICS?

It is very exciting but it can be worrying – it depends on how you look at it. I can't believe how quickly it has come. It is going to be an exciting time for East London, for Stratford, where I am from. I don't think we could ever have dreamed that it would happen. I have tried not to think much about the games; that is for when it comes.

### WILL YOU FEEL A LOT OF PRESSURE?

There will be pressure and I am not going to run away from it, but the worst thing I could do is to build even more pressure on myself now. There will be pressure because I am from East London, a stone's throw from the stadium. I could literally walk from my mum's house. Secondly I go as defending champion. There is a lot [of pressure] but it won't do me any good to stress about it.

### FINALLY YOU PICKED UP A GOLD MEDAL IN THE WORLD INDOORS RELAY THIS YEAR. HOW DID THAT GO?

I typically don't run indoors. Istanbul was my second ever 400 indoor [race]. I did a relay in 2006 when the Russians broke the World Record – that was not a run that I remember fondly. So I had a bit of apprehension before this race and wasn't sure what to expect. As a team we knew we would definitely medal, [we were] just not sure what colour. To come out with a gold medal was great. We knew that Russia and America had strong teams... I don't think we really believed we could win gold.

### IT WAS AN INCREDIBLY EXCITING RACE TO WATCH. DID YOU HAVE A SENSE OF THAT?

It is nice to be successful in sport, but it is also nice for people to remember that success, to remember it fondly and be excited by what you have done. I did not know what to expect but I am really happy that I was able to trust myself enough to do the job well. It is nice to have another gold medal to add to my collection so it will sit quite highly in my list of achievements. ●

STUART WEIR is passionate about Jesus Christ and about sport, and spends his life trying to help people see the connection. He has written several books on Christianity and sport and worked as a writer at the 2008 Olympics, the 2009 World Athletics Championships and spent a month in South Africa watching and writing about the World Cup. Married to Lynne with two grown up children he is a member of Kidlington Baptist Church and Frilford Heath Golf Club.



## MAJOR MEDALS

### Individual 400 Metres

2006 Commonwealth Games Gold  
2007 World Championship Gold  
2008 Olympic Gold

### 4 x 400 Metres Relay

2005 World Championships Bronze  
2007 World Championships Bronze  
2012 World Championships Indoor Gold

### Olympic record

**2004**  
400 Metres, Semi final  
4 x 400 Metres Relay, Fourth

**2008**  
400 Metres, First  
4 x 400 Metres Relay



Phil Sheppard