

## Sharon Breaks a Nail

by Sheila North

“And the tea ladies are currently on the pitch here at the 2012 Typing Triathlon, which is being held this year at Ackrington-Stanley Stadium. What did you make of the opening ceremony, Mabel?”

“Oh, I thought it lovely, Jean. I particularly enjoyed watching the slide shows of their holiday snaps as the pictures scrolled across the computer screens. Although, call me old fashioned, but I wasn't sure whether stopping the parade to offer some of the younger lasses a full Brazilian wasn't just a teensy bit questionable.”

“A lot of our older viewers agree with you, judging by the five phone calls we received - our 15 hopefuls are trooping onto the pitch now, carrying their laptops, although one lady appears to be struggling with a rather chunky PC. Can you tell our viewers anything about her, Mabel?”

“Yes, she's Violet Johnson, our oldest contestant, a Leeds resident whose CV boasts over 40 years in the field.”

“In the field ... good one, Mabel. How old is Violet?”

“Now Jean, you know a lady never tells her age. I can say that our youngest contestant, Sharon Lonsdale from Ecclesfield, is 19, whilst the only man taking part today is Howard Burke, a 29 year old temp from Brighton.”

“Team GB is well represented today, having come fresh from the World Temping Games at the Grimsby Job Centre early last month.”

“That's right, Mabel, although of course neither Violet nor our other British hopeful, Lisa Warniski from Barnsley, were able to take part as they were permanently employed at the time.”

“Yes, and - “

“So sorry to interrupt, Jean, but Howard and the girls are all set up now, as are the officials. The starting kettle has been switched on and ... *it's boiled!*”

“And they're off and typing! First up of course is touch typing, considered by many to be the easiest of the three.”

“I don't know about you, Jean, but I'm inclined to disagree. When I think of the state of some the things I was asked to type over the years: covered in coffee or tea stains, in jam – *jam*, I ask you! And don't even get me *started* on handwriting! Company directors, my Auntie Nelly – you'd think they were little more than grubby little children if -”

“Sorry Mabel, but did you see that? Hazel Fleming from the US has just been over for her third – *third* - cup of coffee, and there's five more minutes left of touch typing, and of course the audio and dictation segments after that. And *no* loo breaks are allowed, of course.”

“That's right, Jean, loo breaks were dropped following allegations of drug taking by Anna Kozmitski of the Ukraine during the LA Olympics, after her trip to the loo was followed by an increase in wpm from 95 to 120. Hazel will be plaiting her legs before we reach the dictation, mark my words.”

“So far Hazel and Lisa are the only Brits to resist the tea trolley, while most of the others taking part have settled for the complimentary bottle of our sponsored water.”

“As I'm sure you'll recall, in the Hastings heats, American Mary Ellen Ellis was disqualified after judges ruled that she had too many Krispy Kreme crumbs on her keyboard.”

“Those sticky keys really slowed her down during the – *oh no!* Sharon appears to have *broken a nail* – yes, if our camera man can just zoom in there, you'll she's stopped to file it. Will she be penalised if there's any dust on her keyboard, Jean?”

“I don't think so, Mabel, although like the rest of Team GB with the exception of Hazel, Sharon paints her nails, so she may be docked points for aesthetics, and of course -”

“Sorry to interrupt you, Jean, but the kettle's boiled again, and the girls and Howard have just popped on their headphones for the part two of today's Typing Triathlon. In an interview before today's broadcast, Lisa was saying this is her least favourite part, isn't that right, Jean?”

“Yes, Mabel, but I think there are only a few – Diane Watson from Australia springs to mind – who really shine at audio.”

“Diane's over at the tea trolley at the moment, queuing behind Nancy Hawks of Team USA, who appears to be getting another can of Red Bull. Isn't that her third?”

“Fourth. She'll be ... oh *no!* Debbie Henderson from Tennessee has spilled her ice tea *all* over her keyboard!”

“Can we get a replay of that? See, if we zoom in, you can see Debbie working quite diligently, when a slight movement from her right elbow catches her cup, and it's the miracle of the loaves and the fishes all over again. I believe Debbie's using a Toshiba, purchased last year. What's her backup laptop, Jean?”

“It's a - apologies, but a voice in my ear is telling me we're going across now to South Yorkshire, where they're about to crash the supermarket trolleys on the Pissed as a Fart Competitions, outside the local shops...”

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