

Thoughts from the Rectory for August 2024



What a summer of sport we are having!

As I write this England's men's team still have a hope of winning in the football Euros, and although we have no British players left in Wimbledon for the second week, the tennis has been spectacular. On top of that, England face both the West Indies and Sri Lanka in cricket Test Series over the summer; in cycling Mark Cavendish is again excelling in the Tour de France with the women's race still to come, and

in golf, both men and women will be competing in The Open and Women's Open through July and August.

But for many sports fans the highlight of the summer will be watching our elite athletes as they battle for medals in the Olympics and Paralympics to be held in Paris this year.

The athletes competing in the games, as in all elite sport, will have trained incredibly hard, many since childhood, to compete at top level. They will have already shown resilience, stamina, courage and determination and many will have sacrificed much to be there.

A hundred years ago this year, a Scottish athlete called Eric Liddell competed in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris winning, against the odds, a gold medal in the 400m. His name and achievements might have been long forgotten except that his remarkable story was told in the Oscar-winning 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*. Eric was a wonderful rugby player and an inspired runner but above all he was a man with a deep faith whose Christian values underpinned his life and the way he viewed his abilities and sporting achievements.



Eric Liddell said '*I believe God made me for a purpose - but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.*'

Eric believed that his sporting talent was a gift from God and that he should use it to the glory of God and to use the platform it gave him to spread the Good News of God's love to others. The prize for which he ran was ultimately not an earthly gold medal but the prize of being with Jesus one day in heaven, knowing that he had served God to the best of his ability.

He said: '*Many of us are missing something in life because we are after the second best. I put before you what I have found to be the best – one who is worthy of all our devotion – Jesus Christ. He is the Saviour for the young and the old. Lord, here I am.*'

That message is still relevant for us today and is the same message that elite athletes with a Christian faith from across the world espouse as they head to Paris for the 2024 Olympics.

But while most of us may never reach the heights of elite sport or are able to articulate their depth of faith for ourselves, we can all strive to use well the gifts and talents that we have been given. We are all called to be the best we can and to run the race that God has set out in front of us.

So, as we watch and cheer on our athletes this summer in whatever sport we are passionate about, perhaps we might do so more mindful of our own God-given gifts and using them to the best of our ability.

Blessings for a fulfilling August

Revd Ruth