

July 2012

After last week's excitement of the Torch coming through Medway, tonight finally sees the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games. Some readers may not share in the excitement for a whole variety of reasons but for me the Olympics is by far the greatest sporting event in the world. It is an opportunity for athletes of all shapes, sizes, ages and genders to show hard work, dedication, commitment to their sport pays off and our county's athletes will be their alongside the global elite.

I am not the kind of tribal politician who thinks that everything the last Labour Government did was bad and securing the games, with cross-party support, was I think one of its greatest achievements. Some will say it is an expensive waste of money and many of Medway's residents will over the coming weeks be caught up in the inevitable traffic chaos, costing businesses and individuals time and money. While Government will argue that the nation will see a major economic boost through tourism and retail from the Games, to me the real impact of London 2012 will be something that cannot be economically quantified – its legacy.

I remember sitting on my Dad's lap as a 5 year old watching Seb Coe and Steve Ovett battle it out in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. It was a rivalry that split the nation. But it also sent me and probably thousands of other children out into their gardens to race against their imagination. I lost count of the number of times I put my feet in imaginary blocks, took an imaginary deep breath, heard the imaginary starter gun, and sprinted off to the imaginary finish line to the cheering masses in my head. I was Seb Coe.

Athletics is the basis of all sports and thanks to its mass broadcast coverage, the Olympics can inspire like no other single sporting event. There will be youngsters across Medway who will in the coming weeks watch local, national and international elite athletes and will head out to their imaginary starter blocks, diving boards, trampolines. Inspiring the next generation and creating a lasting legacy from London 2012 will be worth every penny.