



Evening Standard

LONDON, THURSDAY, 26 JANUARY 2006

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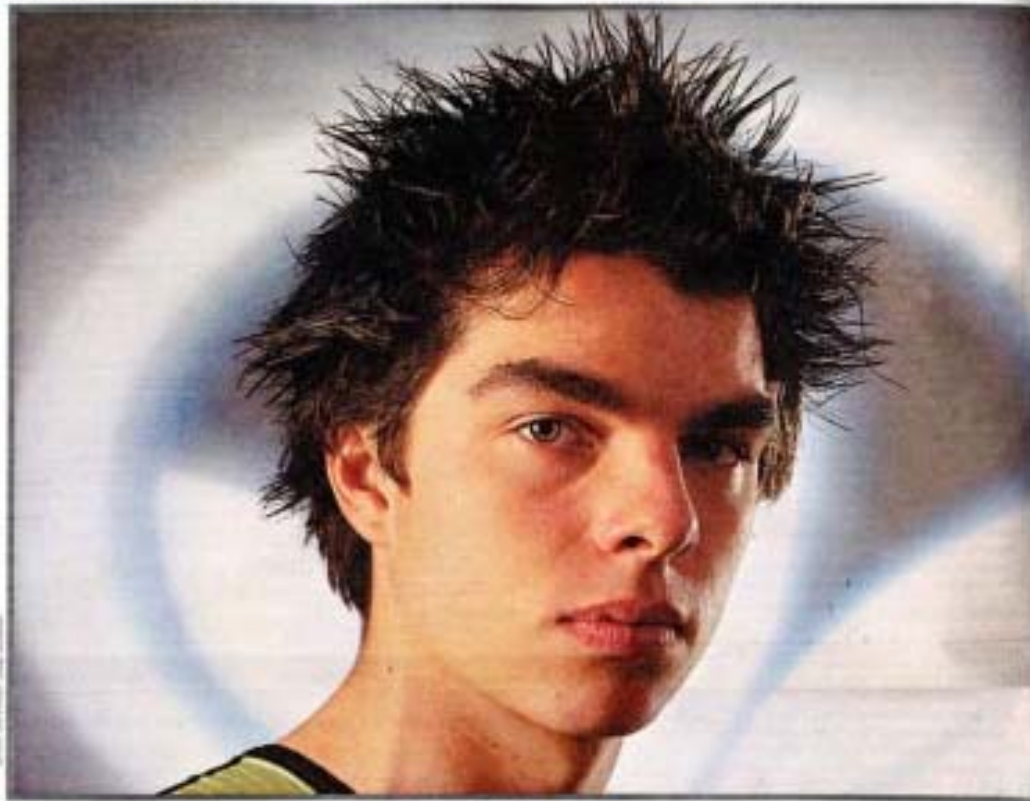
Incorporating THE EVENING NEWS

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Brilliant Olly is our brightest hope

Derik Barnes, or to pursue the road to sporting glory taken by his cricketing misadventure Colin Cowdrey. "It was a key moment for me," recalls Freeman, snatching a break between training at the University of Brighton campus in Eastbourne. "I'd been hovering on the edge, agonising over whether it should be Cambridge or Brighton and the 2002 decision nudged me over. I'd risked myself to Paris, winning, but then thought, "Wow, an Olympics in London - it's amazing!" His mind was made up. He had

already deferred his place at Cambridge for a year to try full-time training and now decided to go for broke. "I wrote to the college again and asked in as many words, 'Any chance you could hold this place open for me?' and they said they would. Indefinitely. "I felt lucky and privileged because if my triathlon proves a flop, I'll have just a few years, but essentially I could be back where I was after finishing school."

He doesn't think he will fill but it remains to be seen just how bright this bright young thing has really been. The size of the gamble he'd taken quickly dawned when 18 months ago he sprang from his home in Searles, Kent, to live and train in Eastbourne where his coach, Glenn Cook, is based. Swept from his comfy middle-class existence and long before his current battery funding and sponsorship deals, he was suddenly presented with the culture shock of training for himself on a pitiless in sooty coastal dunes. As he tramped round neighbouring streets employed as the oldest paper boy in town to make ends meet, he

might have permitted himself the wistful daydream that if he'd made the rational decision, it would have all been punting and Pimm's, not paper rounds. But you get no rose petals from this chippy soul. "The thing is I do really enjoy academic work," he admits. "But, currently, my true passion is triathlon." Which is just as well because a typical day like this drags him down from his girlfriend's parents' house in Eastbourne - his new base where the sooty dunes are thankfully heavy - to the pool at T.11am for a



FREEMAN OF LONDON

Born: 21 January, 1986
Education: Tonbridge School
Major achievements: European junior triathlon champion — 2004/05; world junior triathlon silver medalist — 2004; world junior duathlon champion — 2004/05; three-time UK junior triathlon champion; Under-23 English national cross-country champion — 2003; London triathlon series champion — 2004/05

90-minute swim. Later there's a 60-minute running, a 90-minute conditioning and weights session in the gym and another 90 minutes cycling. But how mind-numbing are these monotonous routines for such a fertile mind? "Well it's true it's not rocket science," smiles Freeman but he's adamant that a mathematical brain has helped sweeten the analysis of his training methods and techniques. Hard lessons could be ahead for Freeman as he enters the senior triathlon ranks. The best message in Europe suddenly seems going twice

the distance against competitors are twice as strong, then not buy. That's the challenge. It's hard says, but of all his teachers, it's his family not one believes he's the wrong decision. His dad And a brilliant junior swimmer in British squad who sacrificed his chance of an Olympic appeal once he went to study in Cambridge. Yet his boy Olly will not over to ask himself "what if?" Because, there's only one glittering and it will be based on the hat the Thomson not the Cam.