



PEOPLE

And it's goodbye from him... Paxman steps down from 'University Challenge'

By Taz Ali

Jeremy Paxman is stepping down as the host of *University Challenge* after 28 years asking the questions.

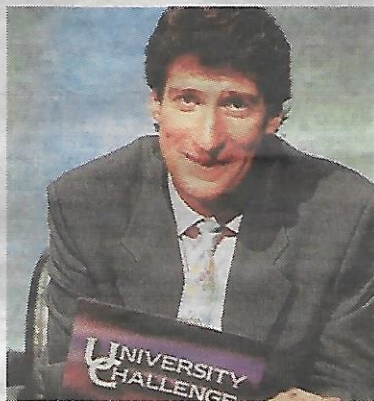
Paxman has hosted the BBC show since 1994, making him the current longest-serving quizmaster on British television.

He will film his last episode this autumn and his final series will air on BBC Two and BBC iPlayer from 29 August through to summer 2023.

"I've had a blast hosting this wonderful series for nearly 29 years," he said. "I've been lucky enough to work with an amazing team and to meet some of the swottier brains in the country. It gives me hope for the future".

He revealed last May that he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, but said at the time that his symptoms were mild.

Earlier this month, ITV announced a documentary in which Paxman will reflect on his diagnosis and meet those at the forefront of research on the disease.



Jeremy Paxman has hosted the BBC quiz programme for 28 years

In June 2014, Paxman left the BBC current affairs programme *Newsnight* after 25 years as its presenter. During that time, he interviewed high-profile figures from politics and culture, including then London mayor Boris Johnson while they both rode a tandem bicycle.

Kate Phillips, the BBC's director of unscripted content, said:

"Since the BBC revived *University Challenge* in 1994, Jeremy has been at the front and centre of the show's success and is without doubt one of the world's finest and most formidable quizmasters.

"We are hugely grateful to Jeremy for his dedication to the programme for an incredible 28 years. He will be much missed by us all and the show's millions of viewers."

University Challenge's executive producer, Peter Gwyn, said: "Jeremy has been our presenter, colleague and friend for 28 years, and everyone on the *University Challenge* production team will miss him greatly.

"He'll be sorely missed too by both our audience and by the generations of students who've relished the chance to pit themselves against him in more than a thousand matches."

University Challenge celebrates its 60th anniversary this year as the Britain's longest-running quiz show, with a special documentary airing on BBC Two on 29 August.

The show's new presenter is set to be announced later this week.

Quips Paxman's best bits

Paxman: When he landed at Brixham in Devon in 1688-

Contestant: William I?

Paxman: No! William I?! No, I'm sorry, that's the wrong answer, you know it's very wrong by about 600 years or so

Paxman: Timothy Dalton, Orson Welles, Toby Stephens and Michael Fassbender are among the actors who have played which romantic figure, the creation of Charlotte Brontë?

Contestant: Inspector Clouseau?

Paxman: I don't know how you got there, that's completely wrong... That's one of the funniest misapprehensions we've ever had on this show.

Paxman: In the 20th century, who held the position of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom-

Contestant: Margaret Thatcher.

Paxman: How did you know I was going to ask for the longest period of time?

Contestant: Well, what else is it going to be?

Paxman: Okay, let's see if you get these bonuses right, they're on French land borders, you smart arses. Right along the Belgian border and including the historical Dutch-speaking region of French Flanders, what is the most populous French department?

Contestant: Lille?

Paxman: No, it's Nord. Not all so easy are they?

Paxman: The nicknames cheese mongers, cherrypickers, Bob's own, the emperor's chambermaid, and the immortals are, or have been, used for which groups of men?

Contestant: Homosexuals?

Paxman: No, they're regiments in the British Army, who will be very upset with you.

Talent scouting Faces in the frame to replace Paxman

1 Sandi Toksvig The 64-year-old Danish-born broadcaster and *QI* host is the frontrunner to step into Paxman's shoes, with Ladbrokes offering her odds of 2/1.



4 Samira Ahmed BBC journalist and broadcaster Ahmed has worked across Radio 4's *PM*, *The World Tonight* and *Front Row* but taking on the job of hosting *University Challenge* would be her most high-profile role yet.

2 Fiona Bruce The favourite with Betfair to claim the role, with odds of 2/1. The 58-year-old journalist joined the BBC as a researcher on *Panorama* in 1989 and over the next 14 years rose to become the first female newsreader on the BBC's flagship *News At Ten*.



5 Amol Rajan The BBC Media Editor and *Today* presenter courted controversy with his documentary about the Royal Family but would enjoy the academic nature of *University Challenge*.

3 Richard Osman In April, Osman announced he was leaving the BBC One game show *Pointless* after nearly 13 years to spend more time writing novels.



6 Richard Ayoade The 45-year-old has proved to be a popular choice as host of the *Bafta TV Awards* since 2020 and also fronted the revived *Crystal Maze* series on Channel 4.