

Dave Rainford obituary

Professional quizzer, known as 'Tremendous Knowledge Dave', and resident professional on the television show *Eggheads*

Thursday April 16 2020 – 12.01 The Times



Dave Rainford appearing on Eggheads, where he was the new boy

He was the new boy in the resident team of professionals on the long-running BBC quiz show *Eggheads* and he was facing a team of five challengers by himself. All the other professionals had lost their head-to-head battles and were out. Dave Rainford was on his own in the final money round against the collective brainpower of the guest team Quiz Family Robinson. If he was nervous it did not show. The broad smile that characteristically creased his face hardly wavered.

Rainford had once made a living from pub quiz machines in Manchester, Wigan and Preston and was banned from several establishments. He acquired the nickname "Tremendous Knowledge Dave" when he appeared on a regular slot on Piccadilly Radio in Manchester. Listeners would phone in to test him with questions and when he got them right the host would say "tremendous knowledge, Dave".

With Quiz Family Robinson 3-2 ahead in the final round, he needed to get his third-multiple choice question right to stay in the game. He admitted he was not certain who played Karla in the TV drama *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, but correctly plumped for Patrick Stewart. Three-all and it was sudden death with no multiple choice.

The challengers were certain that MAL was not the car registration mark for Malaysia and immediately ruled it out, eventually opting for Malta. It turned out it was Malaysia. If Rainford got the next question right Eggheads would win.

Rainford's other passion was sport. He had been a Manchester United fan ever since meeting Sir Matt Busby as a boy when they both lived in the Chorlton area of Manchester. Once when working for the Channel 5 show *100%* he managed to sneak in a question asking if the Liverpool home strip was all white, all red or green with envy.

He showed little emotion when asked the German name for Bavaria, but he knew he had won. He took his time, but he knew it from the football team his heroes had beaten in one of the most dramatic Champions League finals ever. The answer was Bayern.

But there was no leaping in the air. The first thing he did was applaud the opposition.

He was born David Omotayo Domingo in Manchester in 1968. His heritage was Jamaican and Nigerian, though he rarely spoke about his family background. He was brought up by his maternal grandmother and took her surname. He went to the local primary school in Chorlton, won a scholarship to Manchester Grammar School and concluded his formal education at Parris Wood High School.

He did not go to university, but earned a decent living from the newly popular pub quiz machines, at a time when such machines had a relatively limited stock of questions.

“I’m quite good on the quiz machines,” he told the *Manchester Evening News* in 2005. “I was taking lots of money out . . . At one pub in Wigan, where I’d been on a particular winning streak, things turned nasty and I was threatened with physical violence. At another pub in Rawtenstall the landlord was that fast he would run over to the machine and kick the plug out before I even bought a pint.”

Rainford ran pub quizzes, appeared on several television shows and started setting questions for *Fifteen to One* after a friend spotted an advert in *The Times*. He was working for the organisation Diverse Culture, promoting diversity in the workplace, when he appeared on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* in 2005.

He reckoned he spent £1,000 on premium-rate phone calls to get on and had to use his first “lifeline” and ask the audience for help with just £500 on the board. For £250,000 he correctly identified Charlie Chaplin as the individual not born in 1899 out of Chaplin, Bogart, Hemingway and Duke Ellington. For £500,000 he thought Mungo Park was a surgeon, but he was not certain and decided not to risk it and settle for £250,000. When told he would have been right with surgeon he simply nodded and said “fair enough”.

“I think £1,000 would have been good because I had such an unbelievable day,” he said.

Rainford told the press that the money would pay for a deposit on a house, a trip to Australia to marry his fiancée, Tina, a nurse, and a Wendy house for their young daughter, Ella. Tina and Ella both survive him.

He joined *Eggheads* in 2012, replacing CJ de Mooi. He described it as his “dream job” and he was hugely popular with the crew, keeping them supplied with chocolate. His specialisms were sport and entertainment. Pat Gibson, one of his team-mates, recalled that after a day of filming in Glasgow they went to watch the Glasgow Rocks basketball team and met the players. “Later our taxi driver turned out to be a former member of the pop band Marmalade to Dave’s delight, pop and sport on the same outing.”

His mobility problems worsened over time, but he appeared at numerous charity events and still found time to compete with his team, the Prodigals, in the Withington Pub Quiz League. They won the league last year.

Dave Rainford, professional quizzer, was born on November 22, 1968. He died of heart disease on March 7, 2020, aged 51