



Occupying the columns in the UK for the past week has been the head-to-head rivalry between ITV and BBC for viewing figures on the last Saturday before Christmas.

Being outside the UK you could be forgiven for not knowing that more than 10 million viewers watched England cricketer Darren Gough become the first ever bloke to win the Strictly Come Dancing competition.

Yorkshireman Darren praised his dance partner Lilia Kopylova who he said had "transformed his performance." Darren and Lilia danced their routine to A Night to Remember. It got a standing ovation, but what did the judges think? "Well like Bisto you saved the best for last," said Craig. "A proper Show Dance, that was what I was expecting," agreed Bruno.

Gough, who ruled himself out of England's tour of Pakistan for family reasons will be 36 years old by the time England set off for the Caribbean to try to win the World Cup. He has reportedly shown an interest in the vacancy for a fast-bowling coach following Troy Cooley's decision to work instead in his native Australia from early next year but England Coach Duncan Fletcher refused to be drawn on Gough's chances.



On the other channel, another 10 million people watched shoe shop assistant Shayne Ward beat off bin-man Andy Abraham to win the nation's hearts in the final of The X-factor. In the show, pop-star hopefuls compete week after week in an elimination contest where most of the pressure seems to come from Simon Cowell the real winner of this program.



Shane's win was put down to the votes from the army of female fans who have supported him since the show began. The 21-year old who was mentored by Louis Walsh, performed Judy Garland's 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow', Johnny Mathis' 'When A Child Is Born' and Daniel Bedingfield's 'If

You're Not The One'. But the show has reportedly been targeted by betting fraudsters, who place large amounts of money on acts directly before the results of the show are announced.



According to ITV, online betting company Betfair became suspicious of betting activity when substantial amounts of money were being placed on acts immediately before the results of the public vote were revealed.

It is thought that the punters placing the bets may have received inside information from telecommunications workers who had access to the results of the public phone votes before they were announced during the live broadcast.

According to reports, a spokesperson for Betfair said: "In this case we found a link, we have spoken to the police to see if they want to take it further."

Reports have suggested that the amount of money won on the bets exceeded £100,000.

Staying with the TV, it's been announced that Celebrity Big Brother will be coming back on January 5th 2006 - I just bet you can't wait.

Anyway having neatly turned the commentary to 'celebrities', this seasons winner is the unlikely Carol Thatcher - yep!, daughter of the Iron Lady herself.

