

How Jewish is Jim Rosenthal?

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By Simon Round

With ITV's decision not to renew the contract of veteran sports presenter Jim Rosenthal, we are set to lose one of the highest-profile Jewish names in TV sport. What do you mean, "Rosenthal" isn't necessarily a Jewish name? You're surely not suggesting that this guy is less than 100%?

For: First of all, that name. There are no recorded instances of Rosenthals not being Jewish — not when they have a face like Jim's, anyway. Whatever way you look at it, Rosenthal has the most Jewish face on telly. Jimmy Greaves certainly thought Rosenthal was Jewish. Back in the '80s, when England played Israel in a friendly in Tel Aviv, Greaves announced: "We'll be fine for tickets, Jim will sort us out."

Against: Ahem. A few years ago, a former JC sports editor phoned up Rosenthal to ask for an interview. After an awkward silence, the presenter replied: "Er, I'm not Jewish actually. I think my dad might be," leaving our sports editor completely speechless. Then, at the 2002 World Cup, he said the same to comedian David Baddiel, prompting Baddiel to write that Rosenthal was the "only case of evolution defying the Trades Description Act".

Verdict: If Rosenthal says he is not Jewish, we cannot really argue with him. However, we are going to award him a decent mark because we do not really believe him.

So we say he is 38% Jewish