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12 Months, 12 Top-Riders, 12 Interviews

by Mad40ne

Interview with

Katrine Jensen

FOR TWO YEARS IN A ROW KATRINE HAS BEEN WORLD CHAMPION IN SINGLE FREESTYLE AND X-STYLE. A CREATIVE AND AT THE SAME TIME SPECTACULAR STYLE. THE AGILITY AND THE PHYSICAL STRENGTH OF A REAL ATHLETE AND A MIND ALWAYS INTO THE SEARCH OF THE NEW. AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL THE FREESTYLERS OF THE WORLD. " ... RIDING A UNICYCLE HAS SIMPLY CHANGED MY LIFE ... " IN THIS INTERVIEW KATRINE EXPLAINS US HOW.

INTERVIEW WITH KATRINE JENSEN TWICE FREESTYLE WORLD CHAMPION



KATRINES MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS

**2016 - UNICON XVIII
(SAN SEBASTIAN, SPAIN)**

WORLD CHAMPION IN
INDIVIDUAL FREESTYLE EXPERT

WORLD CHAMPION IN X-STYLE
EXPERT

**2014 - UNICON XVII
(MONTREAL, CANADA)**

WORLD CHAMPION IN
INDIVIDUAL FREESTYLE EXPERT

WORLD CHAMPION IN X-STYLE
EXPERT

**2012 – UNICON XVI
(BRIXEN, ITALY)**

WORLDCHAMPION IN MARATHON

WORLD CHAMPION IN CROSS
COUNTRY

WORLD CHAMPION IN UPHILL

WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVIEW UNICON GOLD MEDALIST FREESTYLER KATRINE JENSEN ABOUT HER ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMITMENT AND PERSEVERANCE IN HER LIFE.

KATRINE JENSEN WAS BORN IN 1997 IN KØGE, DENMARK. SHE HAD THE TALENT TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL FREESTYLER AND SHE COMBINED HER TALENT WITH TRAINING, PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE IN ORDER TO COMPETE AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS.



WHEN DID YOU START FREESTYLE? WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE THIS PATH?

I used to do gymnastic and every year we did a performance for friends and family. One year in 2007 the local unicycle club did a guest performance. My brother and I thought they were amazing! We both wanted to learn how to ride. I was a little shy, so I just wanted to learn by myself at home, but luckily my brother made me go to a club with him.

This changed my life. Being able to ride a unicycle and being a part of this wonderful community made me more self-confident and strong. I was not shy as long as I had my unicycle by my side.

The club I started in was mainly freestyle based. We focused a lot on IUF skill levels and very soon I started to compete. At first I competed in small unicycle races and then my first huge convention was just one year after I started riding. I went to my first UNICON at the age of 11 in Copenhagen Denmark. I participated in almost everything, but there was something magical about freestyle. I simply loved it. Seeing all those cultures coming together, showing new skills and inventing more together. There is nothing better.

LASSE, NOT ONLY A BROTHER, BUT AN UNIQUE FRIEND IN SPORTS AND ADVENTURE?

Lasse and I have always been very good friends as kids and to have unicycling as our common passion makes me feel extremely lucky. We mostly ride Muni together, but we are also both deeply involved in freestyle. Lasse as a chief judge and me as a rider. It is very awesome as a competitive rider to have a friend and a brother with whom you can talk and discuss every aspect of your sport.

WE WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR LIFE, COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF? WHO IS KATRINE JENSEN?

I love unicycling and that is how most people know me. I am very passionate about everything I do. I love to learn new things, but it is not enough for me just to learn, I want to be good at what I do and it doesn't matter whether it is climbing, slacklining, mountain biking, sewing or baking.

I spend a lot of time with my local unicycle club, I teach in freestyle, I go for long distance rides with them and I arrange muni trips. I enjoy to see them learning and evolving both as individuals and as riders. I am very lucky to be part of a wonderful trainer group as well, which I really enjoy to work with.

YOU'VE HAD A GREAT PERFORMANCE AS WORLD CHAMPION AT UNICON XVII, CANADA. WE REMEMBER THERE WAS A BREAK IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR ROUTINE. THE DISK JOCKEY THOUGHT, THE ROUTINE WAS OVER AND SHE TURNED OFF THE MUSIC :(BUT YOU HAD STILL HALF OF YOUR ROUTINE TO PLAY... WE SAW YOU STAYING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GYM, WHILE RACE DIRECTOR, DISK JOCKEY, JURY WERE DISCUSSING HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM AND FINALLY YOU HAVE BEEN ASKED TO START YOUR ROUTINE JUST FROM WHERE IT WAS INTERRUPTED. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THIS EXPERIENCE? WHAT DID YOU FEEL IN THAT MOMENT? IN SPITE OF ALL THIS YOU DID A PERFECT ROUTINE AND BECAME WORLD CHAMPION, HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?



It was the first time I competed in expert individual freestyle at UNICON. I had never imagined that I would have been able to win. My goal with that performance was to show the unicycle community what I had learned, because I knew (and I had been told by my trainers, too) that it was different. It calmed me down to think like that. Before entering the floor, I was excited to show people my routine. Nervous? Just a bit. When the music turned off I was afraid that I would have to do the entire routine again, but when the audience understood what was going on, and started cheering for me, this gave me a boost of energy and I felt that I would have been able to handle whatever they would have decided. It was a relief though that I could start exactly from where my routine stopped, both because I felt like the first half of my routine had went so well, but also because I was used to train my routine in tiny bits and this made me feel like being in a training session. When they turned the music on again I could finish the last part of my routine with no problem.

GOING BACK TO YOUR LIFE AS ATHLETE, CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR TRAINING? HOW OFTEN DO YOU TRAIN IN THE WEEK? HOW DID YOU FIND A GYM WHERE TO TRAIN?

I practice with my club twice a week. Each time 3 hours. I also used to practice at least one weekend a month with the Danish National freestyle team DFT, I stopped training with them 2 years ago. To be part of a team like that you have to commit 100% to be there every time. It became too stressful and almost impossible with my job and my new other priorities, like going to other countries to teach freestyle or to ride muni. So I decided to increase my training sessions with my club. I started to ride freestyle one evening more during the week with the most talented freestylers. This experience has given me a lot, but it has improved the skill level in my club, too.



When I practice up to an individual freestyle competition at UNICON I start preparing and practice it about a year before UNICON. About three months before UNICON I had the opportunity to rent a gym almost every evening and as soon summer school holidays started I could use it all day long.

I also do other disciplines such as long distance and muni to practice my endurance and balance. I always ride 10km to work each way, back and forth with my 36”.

BUT, LET'S SPEAK NOW ABOUT YOUR JOB. WE KNOW YOU HAD A LONG AND CHALLENGING APPRENTICESHIP. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHOICE?

I am a pastry chef. I have always loved to be creative and especially to bake. It can be very hard to match with unicycling at elite level, because a lot of my practice was happening in the weekends and as a pastry chef you work every second weekend. It is one of the reasons why I do not ride at DFT anymore. This was a very hard decision. It doesn't mean that I'm riding less than before, it is just different from how it used to be.

YOUR DAY STARTS VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING....

I love to get up early in the morning and even if it is dark I don't mind to go for a ride, in fact I have learned to love it.

SOMEONE SAID, A CHAMPION IN SPORTS IS A CHAMPION IN LIFE, TOO. THIS MEANS THE APPROACH DOES NOT CHANGE, PERSEVERANCE AND COMMITMENT SIMPLY BELONG TO THE DNA'S OF AN INDIVIDUAL. IS IT RIGHT?

In some way I think that it may be right. I do believe that we all have something that we are natural good at, and something that we find more challenging and difficult. Being a competitive unicyclist have taught me a lot of things that I have had good use of in many other aspects of my life.

WE KNOW YOU LIKE ALSO MUNI AND TRIAL. BOTH SPECIALTIES ARE FAR AWAY FROM FREESTYLE.... DOES THIS BELONG TO YOUR TRAINING METHOD OR IS SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU LOVE UNICYCLING IN ALL ITS FORMS?

It is a little bit of both. I was convinced that I would have been a really better freestyler if I would have mastered other unicycle specialties, too, but for me it is also about having fun. I love to ride muni and long distance just as much as freestyle, and trial is just a wonderful competition. I find it super fun to compete in.

WE RECENTLY HAD THE CHANCE TO OBSERVE YOU DURING ONE OF YOUR TRAINING SESSIONS IN MILAN AS COACH OF A GROUP OF YOUNG FREESTYLERS. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THIS NEW EXPERIENCE? WHAT DO YOU ALWAYS TEACH THEM FIRST?

After becoming a world champion, I have been asked to teach other freestyle riders around the world. I love when I get those kinds of opportunities, I find it very fun and also very giving for my own riding, because just as much as I teach them, I feel like they teach and inspire me as well.

The most common trick that freestylers want to learn is crossed leg riding and crossed leg drag seat, but also hand riding and hand/foot riding is very sought after.

KATRINE, YOU CLIMBED THE TOP OF THE PODIUM IN INDIVIDUAL FREESTYLE AND X-STYLE IN 2014 IN MONTREAL AT UNICON XVII AND AGAIN IN 2016 IN DONOSTIA AT UNICON XVIII, BUT YOU DID NOT COMPETE IN ANSAN, WHY? WAS IT A FORECASTED DECISION?

I have been riding competitive for a lot of years and after 2 UNICON's with intensive individual freestyle practice I didn't have the inspiration to do one more. At the same time I had my final exam right before UNICON and therefore I decided that I would be a lot happier to go to RI.UNI.TI in Switzerland and ride Muni.



WHAT ABOUT YOUR NEXT WORLD CUP?

I don't know when my next competition will be, but I always practice as if I had to prepare a routine in that very same moment. I practice new tricks and combinations and I always play with different thoughts of freestyle themes in my head. In the upcoming year I am going to be at an adventure school in Norway with mostly mountain bike and skiing on my schedule. I do not know exactly when I will perform and be ready with my next freestyle routine, but I am quite sure that I

will be in Grenoble. 😊 Yes, I miss UNICON and I look forward to see everybody again in Grenoble.

YOU INVENTED A LOT OF REALLY HARD AND SPECTACULAR TRICKS. HOW DO YOU GET ALL THESE IDEAS?

I like to play with new ideas. Sometimes they come from friends and sometimes it is just me hanging around on my unicycle. I like to watch videos of other sport athletes or performers. They inspire me to use my body and balance point in different ways.

DO YOU PREFER TO TRAIN ALONE OR IN A GROUP? AND WHY?

I definitely love to train with others. I find it much more motivating, but it doesn't stop me from practicing alone, I also find some kind of joy in that.

YOU ARE ONE OF THE BEST FREESTYLER OF ALL THE TIME. BUT DO YOU ALSO HAVE SOME UNICYCLIST YOU LOOK UP TOO? AND MAYBE WHO INSPIRES YOU?

Unicyclists I meet around the world inspire me always. I love to see different styles of riding. Sometimes they are very talented riders and sometimes they are young and creative new riders. I also get very inspired by MTB and trail rider Danny MacAskill, he does ride 2 wheels, but the way he enjoys riding is very admirable.

THANK YOU KATRINE FOR THIS ENJOYABLE INTERVIEW. YOUR PASSION FOR WHATEVER YOU DECIDE TO DO IN YOUR LIFE, YOUR LOVE TO LEARN NEW THINGS AND TO TEACH TO OTHERS WILL CERTAINLY HELP TO MAKE OUR SPORT EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL AND UNIQUE. HAVE A NICE STAY IN NORWAY.

WE WILL WAIT FOR YOU IN GRENOBLE!



WITH THIS VIDEO WE SAY GOOD BYE TO KATRINE AND INTRODUCE YOU OUR NEXT INTERVIEW. YES, NEXT MONTH WE WILL HAVE THE PLEASURE TO MEET RYAN OLFERS, ANOTHER GREAT ATHLETE, 2 TIMES WORLD CHAMPION IN FREESTYLE.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMsP/ZknGVp&feature=youtu.be>