

Interview of Benoit CAMPARGUE by Thomas BARON
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Is there an optimal hivernal preparation for a F1 pilot or does it always depends on its needs, both physical and psychological ?

Physical and psychological aspects are connected. If you don't feel well physically you are not trusting yourself and your mental situation is unwell, the opposite situation is also true. The hivernal period (which lasts a little over 3 months) is a privileged period for several reasons. First of all it's a moment where you can have some time to recover, construct, prepare yourself peacefully and anticipate the next season, a comfort you won't have once the season starts. You can see several cycles or phases, they can be more or less long according to the pilots, their environment, their needs and history. You don't train a 30 years old pilot like you train a 17 years old one.

We separate :

- a **decompression phase** following the intense sportive season on all plans : pressure, time zones, physical fatigue, media and partners sollicitations. It is true that the season is long but she cannot be lived like a true calling, especially when it doesn't work. To remind yourself that you are lucky to do what you love is an important factor in tough times where time seems longer, but the performance shall stay the main focus. The biggest champions are those who can master these moments and perform despite them. This phase can last 3 to 5 weeks knowing that the first week is often a mix between sollicitations and recovery. This period is ideal to have a medical check up and settle any pathology or eventual wound that cannot disturb the next season. Holidays which are more or less active and/or family gathering often come to complete it. To live normally at a given point is part of high level athletes planification.
- the **resumption phase** lasting from 2 to 3 weeks has to arrive at a point when desire and the taste of effort reappear. There is several possible situations : either you move to do a multi-activity resumption camp (in the mountains or under the sun or both) or you do it at home while practicing several disciplines to get back in shape for the next more intense cycle. To gather as athletes for sport regularly is a good basis.
- the **development phase** (approximatively 4 to 6 weeks) is when you prep directly and specifically for the season. It goes from 1 to 2 month before the first Grand Prix. The cardiovascular work gets more intense and goes with a more and more specific muscular work. Beyond the quoted qualities, prevention is also an essential element because preparation is about preventing or limiting damage or potential wounds (following a chock for example). Here the muscular consistence (and not the volume) is essential in order to limit wounds such as breaks, herniated disc, tendonitis, ... In F1 we then talk about cervical work but it is only one element among others.
- the **specific preparation** phase alternate between specific piloting preparation and tryout sessions. It doesn't last very long and concludes the inter season while working on the last details. Here it is important to avoid to work too much on the very used muscular groups like the cervical part to avoid stiffness for the resumption. It allows the athlete to directly feel better.

What kind of exercices can a pilot do during those weeks between the end of the season and the return of hivernal trials ?

You cannot do everything at once, therefore hivernal trials (starting in February) are included in the development phase and are landmarks for the preparation. Even if the test are the priority for the moment they cannot induce change in the preparation. I use some sportive discipline as tool depending on the pilot, on what he likes but also according to his physical profile (more or less stamina, more or less fragile, ...). Some for the physical aspect, mental and visual focusing abilities, others for the fundamental work, the aerobic power in order to set up a physiological base before focusing the preparation on quality and specificity. Musculation and muscular reinforcement are part of the preparation. The first one is used, among other things, for image and self-trust because when you feel good in your body, your mental follows. As you know force and more specifically maximal force (used in small doses allow the development of motor coordination abilities. Muscular reinforcement is used to anticipate the constraints connected to F1 and injuries. Interesting exercices are almost never used in the automobile world. Some training settle between

lasting and resistance and according to the distance you make you can progress on letting go qualities and apnea phases (these are very common in F1 piloting especially during qualificative trials). One of our specialist (a former member of the French national team) developed very specific sessions for that. We sometimes use combat sports for those who want to try it because automobile doesn't allow direct contact with the opponent, beyond coordination work it allows to tone down the opposition.

What are the physical specificities of the F1 compared to other disciplines like judo ?

The F1 is a discipline centered on stamina and lasting strength. Judo is a sport more focused on strength, speed, resistance and coordination. The common aspect is mostly the mental side which is one of the most important part of judo but the approach is different, therefore it is necessary to adapt and make sure that the practicing is safe.

Did you expect this work before you started working with Romain Grosjean ?

When we take an athlete in Sport Management System, whether it is in F1, tennis, football or figure skating we start by evaluating, then we produce a program that is coherent for the athlete, matching his personality, his profile, his strengths and weaknesses and what he likes. About Romain, we went progressively until setting up something entirely fitting his needs. At his request we started on physical preparation then offered the assistance of our medical and paramedical help along with their presence during competitions. The physical preparation went through different disciplines but also different geographic location which were adapted to the situation. For example we found thanks to our network a gym or a high-level physiotherapist near his house so he wouldn't have to lose time before the Grand-Prix. We also organized special sessions among the special forces. If we had to we could have done the same thing elsewhere because nowadays we have the network and abilities to do this all over the world. We also had to react very quickly to an injury that happened during a grand prix. Thanks to our doctors and physiotherapist which are all specialized in high-level athletes we were able to have a list of medicine available in foreign countries or get an MRI appointment in a day. We also set up his psychological follow up (which is still going on). I had to go with him suddenly on Grand-Prix like the one in Spa in 2012 and after the Olympic Games in London. Being reactive is part of the job, it comes naturally and especially thanks to a gifted team that has the chance to include some of the best specialists.

The work we set up isn't exhaustive, to handle the unplanned is part of the job. In high-level, you can't count your days or hours, with Romain we were available everyday of the week if he ever needed it. I followed him from April 2012 until the end of 2013, today I think he has everything it takes to succeed.

What difference is there between a weekly preparation between two grand prix and a preparation between two seasons ?

Generally, preparation between two competitions is focused on the upholding of the qualities the pilot developed during the in between season. The preparation between season is longer and allows the development of those qualities. Between competition you can have a recovery period more or less long and/or active that we can precise in another subject (we sometimes use cryotherapy in passive recovery). A physical work will complete the recovery period when the competition gets closer and work as a reminder.

Could you describe what could be a typical pilot week in the beginning of January ?

If you consider that the resumption cycle is already undertaken (which is not always the case because of the celebrations and other), according to his geographic location and tools he can use there it's interesting to have a work which is both qualitative and fundamental. First you can have a microcycle based on fundamental work completed by a muscular work and muscular reinforcement. Then we will alternate quantitative and qualitative phases like a distance runner. This will allow the development of the aerobic power which will be useful for what happens next.

Is it hard to take into account the other obligations of a pilot (negotiations, sponsors,...) in the planning-making ?

It is imperative to take these obligations into account but it's also tough! Planning is an essential element in the management of a high-level athlete. I remember when I was coaching Teddy RINER, I was as much of a manager than a coach because I was setting up his extra-sportive solicitations according to his sportive calendar. We would put the sportive project in the center of the system and I would articulate external solicitation around it when possible. Even if it's not perfect you know where the priority lies. It's not the case in F1, this would mean the priority isn't there and therefore it's not a high-level sport. I think pilot should have a person with the necessary abilities in the sportive area to plan and manage his calendar in order to work everything coherently with the stable. It once happened that a pilot came to a Grand Prix exhausted with all the solicitations he had before, he ruined his course when he was in the front row.

Which exercises is it possible to make to muscle the upper body (neck, back, arms and shoulders) ?

It would be too long to go over the details of every exercises here. You have to see the pilot in its entirety and have more of a global approach than a segmentary one even if after we work on precise parts. A muscle or a body part doesn't work on its own, we talk about the muscular chain. If you want to reinforce the neck for exemple, you have to do it also for the trapezius muscle, the back and the oblique muscle. Even for stretching, if you want to stretch the back you need to stretch the entire posterior muscle chain including the tibial hamstring. The coordination between chains is also important in the slackening which is essential in piloting. Beyond the material you have, you have to be inventive in order to be able to work everywhere when you don't have everything you need with you. For the cervical rachis and the rest we use new machines in INSEP that work on the concerned muscle (Scalene, pre-vertebral, sterno-cleido mastoid, infra-hyoid,...). This allows the possibly of having interesting landmarks on the progress they made. When you talk about cervical it's often about the resistance to « G » however the work on the cervical is very important for other reasons. Let me explain, the stability of the head and its resistance to constraints coming from the « G » or the shaking works in favor of the stability of the gaze and, foremost a efficient piloting in order to visualise braking marks, point string and peripheral vision work on its opponent. One look in the rear-view mirror has the take less time than possible and at the same time give a precise and clear information. In this precise case, we first put in place a reinforcement muscular work on the overall chain then a second work specific to circuits.

What is it essential do to for recovery ?

After the season, it's important the regenerate intellectually, psychologically and physically. You have to settle down in a first time but not brutal, come back on earth, get down from the podium and live normally. It a way to recover mentally, anticipate physical and psychical fatigue to start over with freshness for the next season. For some, priority lies in family, for others it's friend or a second passion they couldn't express until then.

Concerning the physical part this period is a mix because it is supposed to be focused on the pleasure brought by the practice whose orientations aren't always connected to performance. To go out of your way is essential to find the taste and desire in important moments to come. As said in the beginning, the recovery can be active, therefore you practice « pleasure » discipline that allow to entertain yourself and keep up with the pace. It can also be passive with human and material ways.

What advice would you give to a pilot that wishes to stay in shape during the truce ?

I would advise him to optimise at best this essential time to a good pilot career, it's not always the case. For this he has to surround himself with efficient people and good structures, if possible coming from high-level. To start on the right foot in the beginning got the season, be physically and mentally available is essential in a discipline where all points are importants and can make a difference in obtaining a champion's title.