



Robin at his home in Fribourg - Photo by Nicole Antognini

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Meet Robin

I had the great pleasure to be welcomed into the beautiful home of Robin's family in Fribourg, Switzerland. As the door opens you get that friendly vibe that makes you feel comfortable and yet amazed by the stylish architecture of the house. We sit down at the table, full of Robin's pictures in honour of his recent birthday, and start the interview. After the first few words Robin stops me and asks me to be more distinct and to pronounce each one of my words better. In fact, Robin is partly deaf. Now imagine yourself in the mountains, training with other athletes and not understanding a word of what is happening because everyone is wearing neck warmer and face masks, making it impossible to read their lips. And this is only one of the big challenges Robin deals with. This talented young athlete fought long and hard to become the freestyle skier that he is today. Much respect to you, Robin.

The interview takes place and Robin introduces himself.

My Name is Robin Gillon, I'm a 21 year old freestyle skier originally from Amsterdam, Netherland. In two months I will complete the sports school in Brig, which means that I won't have to go back next autumn. So my objective from there on is to try to become a full-time professional skier.

How did you get into freestyle skiing?

I started snowboarding at the age of 3 and continued until age 12. Then I started alpine skiing. While I was training on the slope, I could see all my friends in the park having way more fun than me, which was quite frustrating. Freestyle skiing seemed to be so much more, so free! This is when I realized what I really wanted to do. For me, skiing felt so much better than snowboarding because the movements are aligned naturally for the body. I started training in the snow park in Les Diablerets, which was the best spot at that time, and I've been freestyle skiing ever since.

If you could choose another sport, what would you do and why?

I would probably choose skateboarding because you can go absolutely everywhere. You can go to any place and skate. The amount of equipment required to go skiing is kind of ridiculous: skis, boots, goggles, helmet, bindings, jacket, pants. To go skateboarding all you need a deck and wheels, and you can do whatever you want wherever you want.

Which athletes inspire you?

My main inspiration comes from Derrick Coleman, the number 40 american football player, because he is the first and only deaf NFL player in history. Derrick once said "They told me I should just quit, but I've been deaf since I was three, so I didn't listen." This is what kept him going. Now he is a professional NFL player, not to mention one of the best.

How do you manage school, family, friends? Must be a busy lifestyle.

That's a very tough question. I was probably in one of the best school systems in Switzerland. The sport school in Brig allows their students and athletes to take lessons online, which is a more comfortable and efficient solution considering how often most of us have to travel. In addition the students are very close to the teachers, so we feel free to ask whatever we need. The teachers trust us to take the tests even whilst being abroad. On the family and relationship side, it was a bit harder to manage because I wasn't expecting to be on the road so often. Each year that I was growing in skiing I was also travelling more, which meant seeing my family and friends less. So, all I can say is: Thanks Skype!

Define your philosophy around freestyle skiing?

I think freestyle skiing is one of the best sports because it's still growing and it seems there are no limits to what can be done. This sport has the opportunity to

become bigger and better each year, which makes it interesting and pushes the athletes to be very ambitious. I love skiing and I wanna ski as much as possible so I try to be safe and train as much as I can.

We hear that you knock on wood all the time, what's up with that?

(Laughs) It came from Nick Goepper and my trainer that always knock on wood for good luck. It even became ridiculous, my trainer has a piece of wood in his car and during all our conversations he knocks on the wood. I guess I've got the sickness now, I've gotten addicted to it. I can't talk about broken bones or accidents without knocking on wood (knocks on the wooden table).

You're into your unnatural doubles now?

It actually doesn't feel much different to spin on the right side or the left side. It's part of the progression of the sport. You have to get the movement and be able to make doubles on both sides now if you want to do well in competitions. Of course the first one felt great because I overcame the challenge. But now, it doesn't feel much different anymore, you just have to do it. If you are good, right or left, they shouldn't feel different.

What's your proudest moment so far?

It was the first time I was packing my ski gear to travel the world just because of my career. It was three years ago and it was definitely a dream come true.

Your tips to younger riders?

For what I have experienced, success means work, work and more hard work if you want to get to the top. Work hard at following your dreams by staying true to yourself.

Robin, we wish you all the best in your career and personal life.

Hope to seeing you on TV soon.

Cheers,

Nicole Antognini & the Reverse Team