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Interview: Squash Falconer adventurer, speaker and presenter





Why Squash? My older sister couldn't say my name, Louise. She called me Ease, then Peas,

then Squashypeas and finally just Squash.

What was your journey to this point? I grew up on a farm in Derbyshire and loved being outside and with animals. I

wanted to be a farmer which slowly changed to a vet. During my A-levels, I realised that I didn't want to be a vet and actually didn't know what I wanted to do. I felt pressured to decide. Fortunately one of my best friends suggested a ski season and soon after we

were on our way to Les Arcs in France and my first experience of the mountains. I had a view of Mt Blanc and I would regularly look at it and think, "People climb that mountain, that would be a cool thing to do." The first mountain I climbed was in South America, Acconcagua 6,962m, the highest peak in the Southern Hemisphere. I was 23 and I loved it. Three years

later my friends and I hatched another plan to climb Mustagata in China, 7,546m and we took skis and snowboards and made a film about it. We entered the Kendal Mountain Film Festival and did quite well. I enjoyed filmmaking, presenting and sharing the adventures but didn't know how to make that 'a job'. BAMLIFE 13

Shop online at bambooclothing.co.uk I climbed more, filmed more, and I did more work in the mountains. In 2009 I came up with an idea that would change everything. It combined three

> dreams into one adventure. I would ride a motorbike to the south of France, climb Mt Blanc and paraglide from the top of a high mountain. So it was simple: get there, climb it and (if) I reached the summit, I would fly off! Most people thought this was a crazy idea, but with the help of my partner in crime, the remarkable Irwyn Jehu, (who taught me to paraglide), we made a plan. It took months to source equipment such as a

> motorbike, a lightweight paraglider and a video camera. I didn't have these things... nor any money! I used links with the BBC to convince BMW to loan a motorbike and links with BMW to convince the BBC to loan a video camera. Consequently Ozone promised to loan me a lightweight paraglider and harness. Against the odds my 'creative blagging strategy' worked! What happened next was the best bit - we only went and did it! I was the first British woman to successfully fly from the summit of Mt Blanc ensuring sponsors were happy. I was thrilled not to mention relieved! This project showed me how I could turn my adventures into stories with a value for sponsors. With an amazing portfolio of photos (thanks to the

> generosity of David Spurdens Photography) I approached Salomon, Suunto and Rab for support (kit I loved)! Slowly these incredible brands agreed to work with me. Everest was never a mountain that was on my radar. However, after reaching the summit of Cho Oyu, an 8,201m peak things changed! In order to afford to do the mountaineering trips I worked with the climbing company, Summit Climb who became good friends. I am not a solo mountaineer and without sherpas I could not climb the mountains I have. Despite some sponsors in

place, Everest has a hefty price tag and I needed more. Having never been to university I decided this would be my personal student loan to myself coinciding with my 30th birthday. I had a huge loan to pay back. I wanted to be the first women in the world to fly from the Everest Summit. I made it to the top of the world, but weather made flying impossible". Afterwards I began to do more speaking engagements, presenting work, and worked with new sponsors as an ambassador. I was slowly making money! Fast forward and I have a brand: Squash

Falconer, adventurer, speaker, presenter and just a few weeks ago, four years after Everest, I repaid my loan and things are looking good for the future. What are your plans for 2016? I filmed a television series with an American production company in South America two years ago. I presented an adventure travel documentaru

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riding 3,000 miles on my BMW through Argentina, Chile and Peru before flying to Columbia and Brazil. Each episode involved meeting up with an extreme

exploring their local region. It was an incredible trip with extraordinary people. We are finishing editing and hopefully it will be available soon. How to focus on maintaining your goals and managing to lead an unconventional life? I didn't deliberately set out to have an

sports athlete, doing a stunt or sport with them, and

unconventional life or avoid the nine to five. My life unfolded because of who I am, the people around me and the opportunities I decided to take. Work/life balance is a struggle because I generate

my own income which is a wonderful but also a difficult blessing. Surprisingly I like routine, so whilst I embrace change, challenge and adventure I like having structure, lists and some kind of plan. My goals are to follow my passions so consequently my work and

Mountains have taught me a lot ranging from amazing days, to days so hard you want to curl up in a heap and give up. You have the lows and highs and the goal is as much about the journey, the experience and the people. This perspective on the

my life all blend into one - it's just what I do.

overall situation keeps me on track. Do you train for your challenges and if so how? Yes. In the past I have always done endurance

gym fan and like to use my own body weight and be outdoors. Intense, interval sessions have made such a difference to my overall fitness and strength.

training; out on the hill hiking, long slow runs, road

strength training and 'clean eating'. I'm not a huge

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spectacularly off the wagon usually with chocolate! I also work on training my mind so I can mentally deal with tiredness, change, stress, cold and the variety of things an expedition may throw at me. I

try to create similar realistic situations and mini expeditions to prepare my mind. This includes taking a freezing cold shower in the morning which is unpleasant but one anyone to try. What are your values? Do you turn away any projects as a result?

I'm adventurous, inquisitive and ambitious. Humour and happiness are important to me. I appreciate straightforward honesty and am accountable and dependable. Learning, improving myself or doing

things for others are huge motivators. Where possible I like to do things for charity or have a positive effect on others which I find motivating when things get tough Victor Frankl said. Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how." Love it, so true. I turn projects down if they don't seem like a good fit or don't feel right.

Do you have any big dreams?

be happy and content hopefully finding life balance in the process. Normally I get very involved in the

operate in this community / industry?

It's a huge privilege to be a role model to anybody; young or old, male

r female. I think that it was once a male dominated community and

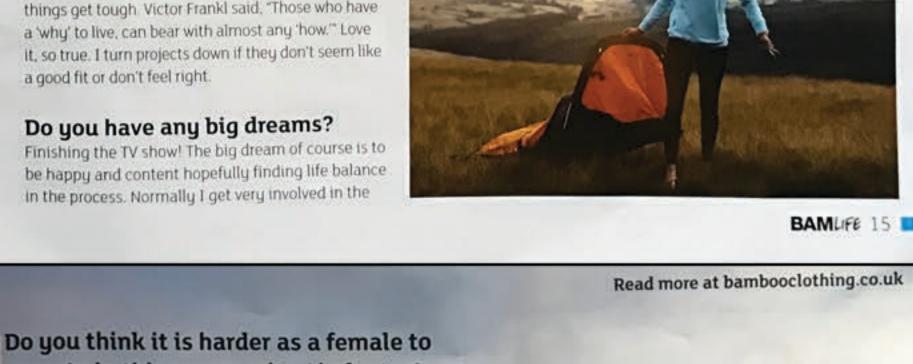
ndustry but that is changing with more women getting involved and I

Finishing the TV show! The big dream of course is to

expedition, life balance was not a priority, being ready and prepared for the trip was. When I got back home though the balance was restored. It seems to run in these cycles. Do you have any causes you support or connect with?

I have used my expeditions and adventures to raise awareness and money for wonderful causes, including: Cancer Research, Coppafeel, Treetops Hospice, The One Foundation, Plant with Purpose

The Mt Everest Foundation for Sustainable Development in Nepal and Tibet and Worldserve International. I have been supporting charities in Nepal after the devastating earthquake.



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