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Sportsister meets Squash Falconer

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Adventurer and mountaineer, Squash Falconer is officially the world's highest ever bum boarder!



In 2008, she climbed Cho Oyu, which is just 600m lower than Mount Everest and bum boarded down. This quirky achievement demonstrates her special gift for designing unique adventures.

In 2009, she became the first British woman to ride a motorcycle to the base of Mount Blanc, climb to the summit and then paraglide down.

Then a year ago, she reached the top of Mount Everest, where she celebrated her 30th birthday.

Squash, whose real name is Louise (she acquired the nickname from her older sister, Jo), is passionate about sharing her expeditions and has a unique approach to adventure. It all started in 2004 when she climbed Aconcagua in Argentina at 6,975m.

Despite lack of experience she had the right team, good fitness and the right mental attitude. She spoke to Sportsisters Katy Dartford about how we can all challenge ourselves – no matter how big or small the goal.

What advice would you give to anyone wanting to take on a challenge?

Firstly you must fully understand what is involved in the challenge and know that you are prepared to do what it takes to make it happen.

Can you be fit enough? Skilled enough? Do you have all the correct gear? Have you got the time needed to complete the training and the time to do the challenge itself? Can you afford it?

Be aware that a challenge is physical, mental and sometimes emotional too. Are you prepared to work on all these three areas. You have to want to do it and be prepared to go for it!



What tips can you give Sportsister readers on how to choose the right challenge for them?

1. Do something you love. What makes you happy and puts a smile on your face?
2. Just because it might not have been done before doesn't mean it can't be done! Don't be put off by coming up with an original challenge if you think you can go for it.
3. Be realistic, aim high but be aware of what you think is possible.
4. Choose a challenge with the right kind of people around you i.e. people with the right skills, people who make you feel confident.
5. Don't listen to people who tell you you're mad, or that you can't do it. You are the one who deep down must decide if you can go for it or not, or if you actually want to!
6. Bear in mind it's often about the journey and not the destination, sometimes the challenge isn't about being the first, the fastest or getting to the top. Be clear about what you want to get out of it. Does the challenge give you those things?
7. Try lots of new and different things. You might not think something is for you, but get out there and give it a go – you might just surprise yourself.
8. Work in a team. You can share ideas, aspirations and also motivate each other. Perhaps other people will help you work out what your ideal challenge is and maybe even do it with you.
9. Set yourself an interim target or goal. This will be a very good indicator to tell you if you're on the right track with your challenge.
10. When you first came up with the idea or heard about it... did it excite you? Did you get that gut instinct that went "yeah, I want to do this". Chances are if that happened the challenge is definitely for you.



You said on Everest you pushed yourself to your physical, mental and emotional limits. How do you know if something is too big a challenge or if maybe you could push yourself further?

You build up to things. For example if you want to become a mountaineer you perhaps shouldn't start with K2! Perhaps you won't know if something is too big of a challenge until you are there or in it. Maybe work in a plan that allows you to back out if you need to.

When I climb a mountain, I don't have to go to the summit. I have turned back on a mountain before. It was still an incredible challenge and I pushed as far as I could and turned back.

Often we can challenge ourselves and push ourselves without risking our lives. A marathon is a great example... you might get your fastest time and push yourself harder than you believed you could go once you are in the real race situation.

Being at the event and the adrenaline that comes from that, often results in people getting a personal best. Putting yourself in a race, competition or situation with a deadline often makes you go further than you thought you could.

What are the rewards of pushing yourself beyond what you may think are your limits?

When you achieve more than you thought was possible it makes you realise that you are stronger/more capable than you thought and that confidence pushes you further next time.

I also think that confidence can translate into other areas of your life too. You may have insecurities that vanish as this new found confidence comes through, you start to realise you are more capable than you thought.

Fear so often stops people doing what they want to do or being the person they want to be. Pushing yourself beyond what you thought was your limit can help remove that fear... and then so many possibilities open up!

It's a really powerful thing.

More info: www.squashfalconer.com/

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