

THE "DIRECT PUNCH" MOUNTAIN RUNNING BLOG

HOOOL RUN

#MOUNTAINRUNNING 

"MY FIRST LOVE
IS
ALWAYS
THE MOUNTAIN"

ZINAL 2016
THE UNTOLD STORY
OF
THE MYSTERIOUS GEL

"BREXIT?
A TOTAL
DISASTER"

"After
the world championships
in 2015
I wanted to
try something different again
so trained
more seriously
for the road races and
ran the London marathon."

ROBBIE GOL

ROB#SIMPSON: 2H15marathon, Jungfrau TRIPLE, Zinal Brained.



#1 Q4-2019



On the cover

Photography: **Marco Gulberti**
Styling: **Elisa Bazzana**

Inside

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www.hooliganrunner14.com

He created a model

Silently, unintentionally, but he did it, he created a model.
A word is enough to identify Robbie:
R U N N E R

He's a runner but he's also a winner, because he doesn't avoid the challenges and defeats that sometimes our sport brings about.

Born on the fells, he grew up in the mountains and became a champion on the Alps, with a 2:15 marathon that makes him unique among European mountain runners.

Robbie is not very social media friendly, but goes straight for the bit target in world class races. He's been through what would be some career-defining years for most people, but it's not enough for him.

Robbie has given up the possibility to win a world championship medal to pursue his dream of an Olympic cap on the road.

Robbie's sportsmanship is shown even in the most important races of the year, note Zinal 2016 when he gave his last energy gel to his struggling opponent, which ultimately proved crucial for the win.

Robbie, who has deep Scottish roots but feels a citizen of Europe at the same time (and f**k the Brexit).

Robbie, whose striking authenticity and down-to-earth the nature has shown what it really takes to become a world class runner: to run strong in quality races. A great example for any athlete, which brings back to basics all the drama that sometimes grows around elite athletes: a tribute to training, speed and performance over photos and likes.

When it's time to run and all the bullshit becomes meaningless, make the right choice: dial his number, call Robbie, choose life.

SKola14

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

DOB: 14/11/1991
PLACE: WEGBERG (Germany)
COUNTRY: SCOTLAND
HEIGHT: 1.80 MT
WEIGHT: 69 KG

*High
Quality*

Q. Hi Robbie and thanks for this interview. We will try to enter deep in some topics with you, but first we would like to know more about your life. How are you doing now and where are you staying now?

ROBBIE - I am doing very well thank you, the last weeks have gone well and I'm starting to think about next year's plans. At the moment I'm in Banchory in north east Scotland and the winter weather and darkness is coming in quickly.

Q. What's your story in athletics ? When did you start running and when and why you decided running could be a big part of your life?

ROBBIE - I joined my local athletics club when I was 11 years old because one of my best friends was a member. For the first year I was last position in every event but I still enjoyed going! One day we did a longer run and it was the first time I was ahead of the other guys so I tried the 800m, 1500m and some cross country races that year. Every year after that I trained a bit more and kept enjoying it. At 15-16 years old it's when I had more of an ambition to be an international runner when I was older.

**From
BANCHORY**

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

Q. Can you call yourself a “professional” runner ?
What does it mean to be a pro today in running ?

ROBBIE - I expect a lot of people think a pro runner is someone who gets rich from running, it might be true for some guys but not for me! For me it means putting my focus in training and racing instead of a more conventional career so I do see myself as a pro in that way. I make some money from racing and the rest from flexible work around my training but really just enough to pay the bills and to get around. Being able to run when I want and to go away for a few weeks on a training camp is what makes it worthwhile.

Robbie Simpson

PRO?



ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

Q. Training: what's your mood ? Do you train a lot ? Do you work at the gym, on the bike or at the swim pool? Which kind of typical week you have during the racing season ?

ROBBIE - I really enjoy running a lot of kilometres through the year and I think I respond well to higher volume training. In a typical week I would run every day with 2-3 harder days and the other days fairly easy running. I aim to run a mixture of trails, hills and roads to keep lots of variety each week. In the last 10 weeks I've started some gym training which I think is helping. Apart from that I don't usually do any cross training except the occasional bit of cycling.

"a lot of kilometers"



Q. Who's your trainer ?

ROBBIE - For the last two years I've made my own training plans and haven't had a coach. It's quite hard to find any coaches specialising in mountain running and also road marathons.

Q. Do you follow specific diet ? What's your approach with food ? Do you have some banned aliments or some food intolerance to bear with ?

ROBBIE - Food is something I enjoy a lot, especially in Italy! Generally I would say it's possible to run well on any diet as long as you get enough calories and good nutrition. I stopped eating meat a few years ago and I prefer that but otherwise I am flexible with what I eat and still try to include fish each week. My ideal meal is something with lots of carbohydrates and lots of vegetables, like a nice pizza with a salad.

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

“She’s a fast road runner and also ran Sierre-Zinal and Jungfrau Marathon so understands the sport pretty well! !”

Q. When do you plan your running season ? And what’s today the big target which influences your calendar ?

ROBBIE - Normally around October/November I think about the winter and early summer plans if I’m planning a road marathon in spring. Then once the marathon training gets hard in January/February I plan the main summer season as motivation to get through the rest of the winter! At the moment I’m deciding which marathon will be the target for spring and what the first mountain race will be. It’s exciting thinking about the plans and it definitely helps me get more benefit from the training compared to not having a big goal.

Q. Are you married or do you have a relationship ?

ROBBIE - I have a girlfriend who I’ve been with for three years, she’s very supportive of my racing and helps me plan the training as well. She’s a fast road runner and also ran Sierre Zinal and Jungfrau marathon so understands the sport pretty well!

Love  Affairs



School

Q. What's your school curriculum ? Where did you study ? Did you like more letters or maths ? Art or science ?

ROBBIE - At school I really enjoyed the sciences and geography. After leaving I completed a degree in countryside management which was a lot about conservation of wildlife and the environment. I actually missed my graduation day to run the European championship in Gap in 2014, it was worth it though!

Q. What's Scotland for you ? Do you feel scot or Brit ?

ROBBIE - I definitely feel more Scottish, I think there's a difference in the culture, people and traditions. It's not necessarily better being Scottish but it's still a difference.

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

TEXT

BER



Q. What's your mind about BREXIT ?

ROBBIE - Total disaster! It's complicated and frustrating and nobody really knows what's going on. I hope to wake up and find out it was all a bad dream (and we're staying in the EU!)

Q. What would be your activity when you will stop running ?

ROBBIE - I'd like to get more in to coaching and spend more time growing vegetables in the garden.

-GROW VEGGIES-



ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn Q. Let's go deep inside now: we knew you as a brilliant young mountain runner in the UK team at the European and world championships, then after that Bronze at 2015 world champs we saw you turn to road marathon and today to longer trail. What happened in your evolution ? Which are your new targets for the future ?

ROBBIE - When I started training properly I was a 100% mountain runner and hated doing any flat running. After a few years I was struggling to make the improvements in races so I started with more flat training and racing which definitely helped me from 2013/2014 onwards. After the world championships in 2015 I wanted to try something different again so trained more seriously for the road races and ran the London marathon. I enjoyed the winter training for marathon so each year since then I've done that as a way to prepare for the summer. My first love is always the mountain and off road events but I want to make the most of being able to run road PBs while I still can. Now I am planning to run my first ultra race just to see what the experience is like. The longer races always seem to suit me better so I'm interested to try it although for the next few years the priority is still races around marathon distance or shorter.

I AM PLANNING MY FIRST ULTRA



2015 WMRC
BETWS Y COED
WALES



ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

Q. We heard that in UK off road is very negatively affected by the fact it's not olympics. What can you tell us about this ?

ROBBIE - Top athletes are not supported financially compared to Olympic sports but I don't see it as a negative thing, it's still an attractive sport to do. The Scottish and GB federations have people really passionate about the sport who do their best with the little funding they do get. There are some brilliant off road races in the UK with a lot of participants but I think the big races don't attract many international runners and they usually have prizes like beer instead of money. It is changing with new events like Glencoe skyline though. Good runners still race the local events but they're more likely to target some bigger events abroad in the summer.

Original

The Simpson Model

- does exist -

Q. May be you do not know but you have create a model for many Italian runners and fans. They saw you brilliant in the Classic then switching on marathons and focusing only on high quality mountain races such as ZINAL, Thyon, Moleson, Jungfrau, some races in Austria. Is that part of a plan?

ROBBIE - I didn't realise! I always wanted to go from the shorter Euro/World champs to the famous mountain races like a lot of the great runners (Jono, Marco and Angela Mudge) then the marathon running was a bit unexpected. Back in the 1980's a lot of our top GB runners were racing on all surfaces including on mountains and roads so I thought the variety and gradual progression up the distances was a good idea.

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

"Petro is a friendly guy and I don't wish him any negative feeling. My issue is with doping in mountain running and the reaction of races and other athletes to doping."

Q. Delicate question: we know your story with him and we were a little bit surprised when we read a post of you about the presence of Petro Mamu at this year Jungfrau. We perfectly understand your feeling and we also blame doping, but do you really have that kind of feeling to him ? Can you put him on the same level of a clear blood cheater ?

ROBBIE - Petro is a friendly guy and I don't wish him any negative feeling. My issue is with doping in mountain running and the reaction of races and other athletes to doping. If we welcome convicted dopers back to races without mentioning it honestly and the other athletes and fans don't say anything then it gives the image that we permit doping and let people off. That's a terrible example to give kids starting the sport and it makes it unfair for those who train hard every day. In other sports much more testing (including out of competition) takes place and it can take a long time to catch someone who's cheating. If mountain running only tests occasionally at the biggest events and still they catch people (for whatever substance) then it should be taken seriously because it's likely there's a lot more going on at other times. Everyone who fails a test has an excuse they think makes them innocent but if that person is also the one winning all the races and the prize money then it's no coincidence.

Q. Being a pro in running needs support from a brand. What's your story with brands ? What do you wear today ? Which kind of support and project are you attending?

ROBBIE - Over the years I've ran for a few different teams but it has been difficult to get support to run mountain races but also race on the roads for the same brand. Or often they are trying to push you in to longer races or to racing more regularly. I've just signed a contract with Adidas Terrex for 2020 which I'm really excited about as they seem like a really nice group. The priority for me is great shoes, a flexible race schedule and a nice relaxed team atmosphere where you feel valued.

Q. Last year in chamonix the IAAF announced the first Mountain & Trail world championships for 2021 , and recently the guidelines have been published by the IAAFI . What do you think ?

ROBBIE - I think it looks great! To have all the championships at one time makes it a much bigger event and inspiring to people who get to watch different races and meet new athletes. It makes it even more of a team atmosphere as you can support other guys from your country in the different distances.

COMING SOON

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

Q. You run the mountain tracks together with the greatest : Kilian Jornet, Jono Wyatt, Marco Gasperi. Who did inspire you more among them and why?

ROBBIE - They are all impressive athletes who've all done amazing things in the sport. For me Jono was the biggest inspiration, I remember watching him winning the World Trophy in Crans Montana in 2008 and I'd never seen someone run uphill so fast. It was my first World Trophy/championships so everything was new.

A few years later I was racing Jono which was cool. He ran so many amazing races on the mountains and also went to a few Olympic Games.

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

Q. SIERRE-ZINAL , what does it represent for you ? Many times so close but not yet on the winning spot. Will you go on attempting?

ROBBIE - This race is epic! I think it's a real classic mountain race with a bit of everything mixed in where you can't hide from where your fitness is on that day. It's one of my favourite races to run and every year I look forward to the atmosphere and catching up with all the runners. I plan to have more attempts at it, I still think I can run a better race but to get the 1st place everything has to click in to place.



THE
untold
STORY

SIERRE-ZINAL
LA COURSE DES CINQ 4000



Q. Zinal and Petro , again, what happened in that famous 2016? Tell us the story of the mysterious gel ...

ROBBIE - It was a tough race. The pace was hard from the start and we were both struggling by Weisshorn. When I overtook Petro I thought there was 5-6km left until the end and he looked in a terrible way so I was 100% sure I could win the race. He asked me for a drink or something to eat so I gave him the final gel I had in my soft flask and ran on. I felt good for a while but then started getting a bit confused and stressed. Just staying on the trail was difficult and I fell over on the final descent. He went sprinting by me just before the tarmac 600m before the finish and I was struggling a lot. I could see another runner chasing me to the finish so kept going until the line (there was nobody behind!) then just collapsed. Everything went black, my heart was beating so fast and I felt like I was suffocating. It took over an hour before I could stand. I'm very grateful to the people that helped me that day!

Q. You won three times Jungfrau, something special. What's your big memory of these achievements ?



ROBBIE - Winning the race this year was one that means the most, there was a strong field and I had to fight all the way after struggling in the middle stages and only took the lead in the final 2km after being 5th until 35km.

My first win there in 2016 was also special, the first year I raced Jungfrau in 2012 I never expected to come back and win such a big race. The weather was perfect in 2016 and I had a big enough lead to enjoy the views at the end.

ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

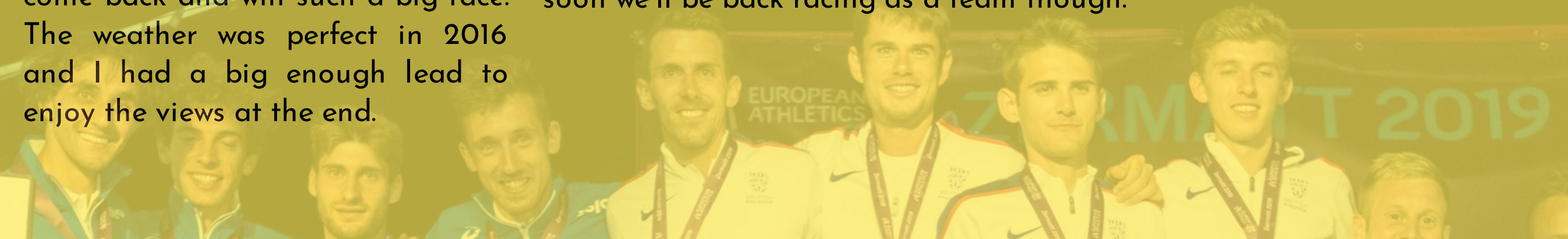
Q. Fans in Italy often asked themselves why GBR does not attend big events with a squad formed by you Andy (Douglas) and Jacob (Adkin) ... then Euro Zermatt showed we were right. Why this will not happen in Argentina ?

ROBBIE - It would be great if we could always race as a team! It was a difficult decision but I didn't plan to run the World Champs because it was in November so I thought it would be too long a season since London marathon in April and reduce the preparation time for a marathon next year. Instead I was going to run a longer trail race in October (Les Templiers), using the higher mileage as the first part of the marathon build up. The race was actually cancelled so it ruined that plan! Hopefully soon we'll be back racing as a team though.

Q. Is there a particular runner you followed as a model ?

ROBBIE - When I was growing up in Scotland I didn't really know any famous runners, it was only when I got older that I started to learn more. I did look up to Andy Murray as a Scottish sports star though. He has a great attitude and loves the sport.

ANDY MURRAY



ROBBIE TALKS

2019 Autumn

Q. What's your connection with Douglas and Adkin ? Are you friend ? What do you think about them as runners ?

ROBBIE - They are great guys and I really enjoy spending time with them. Andy has been one of the top men in the Scottish running scene for a long time so it's been great to see his transition to the mountains since 2014. I've also known Jacob a long time since he was a junior athlete so it's amazing to see him make such great progress. For the last two and half years I've been helping him with the training so it's been even more satisfying seeing him do well.

Q. Jacob won the euro champs in a stunning way but then his season had some hard times. Did you expect that ? Was good to run such kind of races as Dolomys, Zinal and Pikes Peak nearly in a row ?

ROBBIE - I expected him to run very well in Zermatt as that was his main goal. The longer races were more for the experience to try something different and have no pressure as he won the big race he was aiming for. There were some useful lessons learned that will help for when he wants to target them more seriously though.

Q. Andy won the WMRA World Cup this year. Did you follow the series ? What do you think about the new approach of WMRA on this product ?

Yeah it was great to see him race consistently well all through the summer and get the win! I think they've got a much nicer range of races in the series now which is good. The difficult thing is there are a lot of races to complete the series and with European and World champs and the Golden Trail plus other classic races it gets difficult to fit everything in to one season.

LAST SPRINT

Short, Straight, Direct

What's for Robbie Simpson:

Q. The Best race in the world ?

ROBBIE - *Sierra Zinal*

Q. The race victory you never forget ?

ROBBIE - *Snowdon International 2010 as the youngest runner in the race*

Q. The toughest defeat of your career ?

ROBBIE - *Sierra Zinal 2016, so close but so painful!*

Q. Best running shoes ever ?

ROBBIE - *Adidas Boston (but not on the mountain)*

Q. Favorite Pizza ? (As you are a passionate we let you rank the top 3)

ROBBIE - *1-Frutti di mare, 2-Rocket,parmesan&cherry tomatoes, 3-grilled vegetables*

Q. Favorite sport, except running ?

ROBBIE - *Fishing (if that counts as a sport!)*

Q. Favorite drink ?

ROBBIE - *Fizzy apple juice after a hot run*

2019 Autumn

ROBBIE TALKS



ROBBIE SIMPSON
TOTAL RUNNER