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ML24: Hardy, as an extreme athlete you have already caused a sensation in the past. Now you are about to start a new challenge. What is CONNECTED and when does it start?

Hardy: "CONNECTED" is a solo expedition over 500 kilometers in western Mongolia, one of the last untouched areas on earth.

The route goes through Tavan Bogd in the Altai, where I want to fly the highest mountain in Mongolia, the Khüiten Peak, with my speed riding glider. And then up to the Uvs region, where I climb Deglii Tsagaan and also want to fly first.

Getting around is on foot with skis, crampons and depending on the conditions, I hope that I can use my kites here and there to advance.

It is an extremely difficult terrain and it will be a very big challenge to move my expedition sled with almost 100 kilos over this route.

ML24: What is your drive to face a challenge like this?
You won't find a leisurely ski tour, right?

Hardy: The priority is between the start and the end of my trip, in between. Here I hope for the tremendous radiance, the expanse and silence, unforgettable moments that will mentally challenge and shape me further.

An unforgettable experience and enrichment of my life. For me, the psyche is the more interesting challenge compared to sport. I am well trained and can withstand very high loads at "my pace" over a very long period of time. But what is exciting is, as is so often the case, the head.

Especially mine. (Laughs)

Explaining the deeper reason for CONNECTED would take an entire book. In short, it is the case that every few years I need such challenges to deal exclusively with myself again, without the usual influences. Whenever I feel that I have moved too far away from myself.

It is important to fit and insert into our society so that it works. Some find it easy and others find it harder. A little harder for me. I have high demands on myself, that's OK. But sometimes I over-demand the humanistic claim and the uniqueness of people from my surroundings.

It makes little sense to believe that not everything has to do with everyone. Whether we apply this to ourselves and our family, the environment, work or the whole world, we always have a share in it.
Connected (laughs)

ML24: You have already overcome many hurdles and achieved goals in your life. Have you already thought about quitting, especially since you are also responsible for a large family

Hardy: I equate giving up with giving up when it comes to dealing with yourself and your environment. So I'm not going to stop working on myself until the end, questioning myself and my actions, whether in society, the environment, raising children or whatever. Of course, at some point the body is no longer able to undertake such adventures. Hopefully the head will stay there for many years.

I am fully aware of the responsibility towards my four children. I sacrifice myself for them and try to offer them everything I can. But you shouldn't forget about yourself. You can only give if you work yourself. Khalil Gibran wrote about good and evil: "You can only be good if you are at peace with yourself." I hear the question about responsibility more often, but I only cook with hot water. From the outside, this may be risky, but one should not forget that I have acquired certain things over the past few years that have put such projects back into perspective. I always prepare well and defensively and never have a problem turning around or failing. Of course, I can also die there, just as I can die on my doorstep, while cycling, driving, or due to an illness.

ML24: Speaking of which - what's going on in your head when you're on the go with your sled. It probably depends on the weather, doesn't it?

Hardy: Difficult to say how it will be this time. I know from two projects in Siberia that I was deeply satisfied with the situation at the time and that I hadn't thought anything for days. Which doesn't mean that nothing happened. On the contrary, an overwhelming amount has happened. Apparently not only silence is sometimes gold, but also not thinking. Maybe I was even lost in thinking. (Laughs)
The weather has a very big impact on the project. I have limited gas and food. If bad weather conditions prevent me from moving forward for too long, I won't see my goal.

ML24: Mongolia borders on the Republic of China. Could the corona virus put a spanner in the works of your project?

Hardy: Yes, of course I am concerned. A few months ago I tracked isolated occurrences of marmot plague in Mongolia. And now this virus, which nobody really knows anything about. It goes from appealing to conspiracy theories. The truth will be somewhere in the middle. In order not to get hectic, it is best to compare facts and figures in such cases. So the chance of getting infected is very low. I feel more at risk if I am cycling and drivers do not keep the legally prescribed minimum distance. Should I stop cycling now? There is still some time left before I leave and will make a short decision depending on how the situation develops.

ML24: When will we find out whether your project has been successful?

Hardy: If everything goes well, I'll be home at the beginning of April. Then there are a few brief insights here or there. In autumn 2020 a documentary if my technology (cameras, power banks, solar panels, etc.) doesn't let me down in the cold.

ML24: Good luck, we keep our fingers crossed that you succeed CONNECTED!

Thanks a lot!

Questions and photo in High Res.

STUNTS & PROMOTION

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