

January 2019

12 Months, 12 Top-Riders, 12 Interviews

by Mad40ne

Interview with

# Niklas Wojtek

**FASTER THAN THE  
SPEED OF LIGHT**

NIKLAS WOJTEK IS ONE OF THE BEST  
RACE-UNICYCLISTS EVER. WHAT DRIVES  
HIM TO GIVE ALWAYS THE MAXIMUM?  
WHO ARE HIS ROLE MODELS? WHICH  
RESULTS DID HE ACHIEVED UP TO NOW?  
WE WILL FIND ALL THIS AND MORE IN  
THE INTERVIEW HE GAVE US.

# AN EXAMPLE OF REAL PASSION AT HIGH LEVEL.

## INTERVIEW WITH NIKLAS WOJTEK...

NIKLAS IS ONE OF THE GREATEST UNICYCLISTS IN RACE OF EVER. HIS RESULTS SPEAK FOR HIM. THE FIRST TIME NIKLAS SAW A UNICYCLE COMPETITION DATES BACK TO 1998 WHEN UNICON X TOOK PLACE IN BOTDROP, HIS HOMETOWN. IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, NOT JUST FOR HIM, BUT FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY. 2000, NIKLAS IS JUST 7 YEARS OLD, WHEN HE TAKES PART IN GERMANY TO HIS 1ST CHAMPIONSHIP.

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HE HAS TO DATE WON 14 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, 9 EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS AND SET 4 WORLD RECORDS.

NIKLAS MAKES HIS DEBUT IN 2006 AT UNICON XIII IN LANGENTHAL SWITZERLAND. IN 2010 HE ESTABLISHES THE WORLD RECORD IN THE IUF SLALOM (18.98 SEC). IT'S THE FIRST UNICYCLIST SETTING A TIME UNDER 19SEC! TWO YEARS LATER, AT UNICON XVI, BRESSANONE (ITALY) HE WINS THE TITLE OF WORLD CHAMPION IN THE IUF SLALOM. FROM NOW ON HIS CAREER IS CONSTANTLY ON THE UPSWING AND HIS RACE COMPETITORS START TO LOOK AT HIM AS AN UNBEATABLE CHALLENGER. HERE AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS ACHIEVED BY NIKLAS YEAR BY YEAR.

BUT NOW LET'S TRY TO KNOW MORE ABOUT NIKLAS, BOTH AS WORLD CHAMPION AND MAN...

### THE RESULTS ACHIEVED

#### 2018 - Unicon 19

- **overall RACE Champion**
- 100m World Champion
- 400m World Champion
- 800m World Champion
- IUF Slalom World Champion
- 4x 100m Relay World Champion
- 50m one-foot runner-up
- **new World Record 100m & 200m**

**Member of the Mad4One RACE Team**

#### 2017 - EC UNICYCLING

- 100m European Champion
- 50m one-foot European Champion
- 400m European Champion
- 4x 100m Relay European Champion and **new World Record - 50.716 sec**
- **new World Record 200m & Relay**

**Member of the Mad4One RACE Team**

#### 2016 - Unicon 18

- **overall RACE Champion**
- 100m World Champion
- 50m one-foot World Champion and **new World Record - 7.582 sec**
- IUF Slalom World Champion
- 4x 100m Relay World Champion
- 800m **runner-up**

#### 2014 - Unicon 17

- **overall RACE Champion**
- 100m World Champion
- 400m World Champion
- IUF Slalom World Champion
- 4x 100m Relay World Champion and **new World Record**
- 50m one-foot runner-up

#### 2013 - EC UNICYCLING

- 100m European Champion
- 200m European Champion
- 400m European Champion
- 800m European Champion
- 30m wheelwalk European Champion
- Slalom runner-up

#### 2012 - Unicon 16

- IUF Slalom World Champion
- 50m one-foot runner-up
- 4x 100m Relay runner up



NIKLAS, IN THE YEARS YOU HAVE BECOME ONE OF THE GREATEST UNICYCLISTS IN RACE OF EVER. IT'S ALMOST DIFFICULT TO COUNT ALL THE TIMES YOU'VE CLIMBED THE TOP OF THE PODIUM AND ESTABLISHED OR IMPROVED WORLD RECORDS. TELL US ABOUT YOUR TRAINING METHOD: HOW MANY TIMES A WEEK DO YOU WORK OUT TO KEEP YOU FIT? HOW IS YOUR TRAINING STRUCTURED? DO YOU FOCUS MORE ON STRENGTH OR RESISTANCE?

The content and frequency of my workout sessions are linked to each season phase. At the beginning of the season, my training is not focused on a specific discipline. In addition to resistance workouts on the unicycle, for example, playing hockey or riding on tracks in the wood, I play tennis and go jogging outdoor. I put also in some extra work in the weight room, that helps me to get in shape for the long race season. In spring, the body training sessions on the unicycle increase, and I slowly start focusing on speed. In the competition phase, I ride mostly unicycle and train my disciplines on the track in the stadium. This is how my training slowly changes in the season.

TO BE ALWAYS ON THE PODIUM MEANS YOU ARE DOING EVERYTHING WELL. IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH ARE YOUR STRENGTHS AS UNICYCLIST?

I 'm not sure I'm always doing right. My goal is to train and prepare myself to give my best performance during competition. My strengths, I'd say, is my experience, my ability to concentrate and the enthusiasm I've for unicycle.

WHICH ARE YOUR INSPIRATION MODELS IN SPORT AND IN YOUR LIFE??

My sports idols have been the players Luis Figo and Zinédine Zidane, the tennis players Andre Agassi and Leyton Hewitt and, speaking about unicycle, I've always looked at the best ones, such as Seisuke Kobayashi, Kaito Shoji and Simon Sisnaiske. In my private life my inspiration models have always been my parents and my sister. They are next to me at all times, ready to give me good advice when there are important decisions to be taken.



KOBAYASHI HAS BEEN AN ICON IN RACE. IN WHAT DID HE IMPRESS YOU MOST? WHICH KIND OF SUGGESTIONS AND IDEAS DID HE GIVE YOU?

I saw Seisuke Kobayashi for the first time in 2006 during UNICON XVIII in Switzerland. I was 13 years old and I was simply excited and amazed to see how speedy and safety he was riding a unicycle. I set myself the goal to compete one day against him and maybe even to be better than him. In 2014 I finally managed to do this, we were in Canada at UNICON 17. Yes, Seisuke has been a real source of inspiration and motivation for me. How did I do it? Well, I had a goal: to reach his level of control at high speed, and I succeeded in this.

WHAT DO YOU THINK RACE IS GIVING YOU? WHAT IS STILL EXCITING YOU AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF PRACTICING THIS SPORT?

Riding unicycle is a very unique sport. Many different sports merge together in one sport, unicycle, and become themselves specific disciplines. I consider RACE one of the most beautiful and exciting unicycle specialties. Here the competition between athlete and athlete is exclusively based on time/stopwatch factor! Only your performance counts in RACE, there is no room for impressions or subjective judgments. The various disciplines in RACE require not only speed, but also skill, perseverance and strength. Another fantastic plus of this sport is, above all, the opportunity you have to improve not only in one, but in different disciplines, each one made up of different components, which must match perfectly.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE STRESS IN COMPETITION? CAN IT BE COMPLETELY OVERCOME?

I think that all unicyclists, man or woman, experience stress in competition in a very subjective way. Stress manifests itself in each of us in a slightly different way. For me, it is a "conscious" tension that even helps me. Thanks to it I can raise the level of concentration and body and mind realize that race starts.



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TO SET UP GOALS LIKE THESE MEANS TO GIVE UP MANY THINGS, SMALL BUT ALSO BIG. IT'S TRUE?

Competitive sport is above all something that requires a lot of time. In my opinion we do not renounce to something, it is more an investment in the sport we love most and like to practice as soon as we have free time. Therefore, I would not speak of duty or obligation, not at all, on the contrary, in my free time I would even like to dedicate more time to the sport. Even if, it may happen, we have to train, when it would be fantastic to enjoy sun in the garden. 😊

"THINK GOLD AND NEVER SETTLE FOR SILVER" FOR MANY ATHLETES THIS IS NOT ONLY A SLOGAN, IT IS ALSO A LIFE STYLE. ACCORDING TO YOUR OPINION IS IT IMPORTANT TO ADOPT THIS CONCEPT?

As said before, it is essential for me to train well in order to give my best on the X-day. My goal is "Time" and based on this I see if what I did was enough. If another athlete has a better performance than mine, I perfectly know that here the best wins, I agree with this, and I look forward, when I will be ready to give really the best of me. My slogans are rather "No excuses - no explanations" and "„Don't dream it be it“. These quotes have become for me a life style and the way I approach not only sport.

LET'S LOOK BACK AT SOME OF YOUR BEST CHAMPIONSHIPS: CAN YOU TELL US WHICH ONE HAS BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR YOU AND HAS EVEN INFLUENCED YOUR FUTURE?

What a lot of people do not see are the failures and disappointments, we have sometimes to deal with. 2012 - World Championship, final 400m: at that time I had the best time over all, I was performing even better than Seisuke Kobayashi, despite this, I've been disqualified at the start (early start) and I could not compete. Two years later in Canada, World Championship: Final 400m, same situation: I was the fastest, even better than Kobayashi. This time I was able to give my best in RACE and, for the first time, I beat Seisuke. This race, still today, means a lot to me.

AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF SUCCESS, WHAT ELSE CAN WE EXPECT FROM NIKLAS WOJTEK? ARE YOU ALREADY PREPARING YOURSELF FOR THE EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP IN SITTARD?

That's exactly what I try to find out every year. 😊 Unfortunately, this year I cannot make a forecast. Due to an injury I will not be able to play sports and at the moment, I do not know, when I can start again riding unicycle. I will be in Sittard, for sure, but ,it is not yet clear, whether I will be there as rider or simply as fan.

WHAT'S YOUR WISH FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS SPORT?

For this sport I deeply wish, that it will go on creating such a large community that helps to develop relations and friendships all over the world. Thanks to this sport I have lasting friendships in every part of the world. I also hope that our sport will not suffer the same fate as some minor sports, which are almost disappearing.



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THANK YOU NIKLAS FOR THE EXCITING INTERVIEW. YOU HAVE PROVEN MANY TIMES TO BE A TRUE FIGHTER AND ATHLETE. WE ARE SURE, YOU WILL OVERCOME YOUR INJURY AND WISH YOU ALL THE BEST FOR A SPEEDY RECOVERY! WE KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED AND WAIT FOR YOU TO NEXT APPOINTMENT, READY TO CHEER FOR YOU AGAIN!