



**1. What motivated you to do that race?**

My motivation to do the X-Alps again is simple: for better or worse, I'm hard-wired to tackle ridiculous challenges. When it comes to adventure and challenge in the hike-and-fly world, the Red Bull X-Alps is the toughest competition in our sport. I love the tactical and strategic aspects of the race as much as pushing physical and mental boundaries. Finishing as the first Canadian ever in the last race was an incredible moment, and while I'm proud of that, I'm also hungry to elevate my results this time. But beyond the personal challenge, I'm drawn to the team aspect of this race. Everyone sees us athletes, but it's a huge operation behind the scenes. My supporters, Norm, Benoit, and Mirjam, are as critical to my success as my flying skills. They guide everything from race strategy to on-the-fly tactics, in addition to the basics like keeping me fed. That collaborative effort, pushing boundaries together, is a massive part of the pull for me.



**2. Do you have any advice for someone aiming to take on that kind of challenge?**

First off, go for it! But know that this kind of challenge demands a significant time commitment—years of preparation, not just race days.

Start by getting involved in smaller hike-and-fly events or regular paragliding competitions. You'll gain invaluable skills and learn about yourself under pressure. And fly a LOT of XC, as much as possible!

Beyond the technical skills, your personality is also crucial. In the X-Alps, you'll be working incredibly closely with a small team under immense physical and mental strain. The ability to collaborate, communicate effectively, and maintain a positive, resilient attitude is absolutely vital. You simply have to work well with your team in extremely demanding conditions.

But ultimately, I think the personal sense of accomplishment and reward from tackling something this epic is truly worth every ounce of effort.

### **3. What does a typical week of training look like for you?**

This is really about optimizing every available minute, because it's a constant juggle with a busy work and family life. My core principle is maintaining and building on a significant base of physical conditioning, which is crucial for the endurance demanded by the X-Alps.

I aim to fit in a minimum of 10, ideally 15 hours of physical training per week for 9 months leading up to the race. Generally this is a mix of aerobic sessions like long runs and hikes, alongside cross-training in the gym, cycling, and focused strength sessions. When it comes to flight training, living on the West Coast makes it challenging to fly as much as I'd ideally like. So, to really hone my cross-country skills and get in big airtime, I strategically plan travel for significant off-season XC flying in places like Colombia, where the conditions are consistently prime. It's about making every opportunity count.

### **4. What's been the biggest challenge in preparing for this race?**

The biggest challenge in preparing for the X-Alps is the pervasive feeling that it's simply impossible to be fully prepared. Getting in enough quality flight time before the race is always a hurdle, especially with my competing life demands. Also, losing Grouse Mountain as my regular local hike-and-fly spot the last couple of years has also been a significant hit. It was an invaluable place for quick, effective training sessions.

### **5. Is there a particular moment in your training or past races that stands out as especially memorable or defining?**

There's one particular moment from my last X-Alps that involves Jonathan Klimow, who we tragically lost too soon. It was at the end of a huge day for me: I'd launched from Niesen, circumnavigated Mont Blanc, and successfully tagged the Petit St. Bernard Pass turnpoint. Afterward, following a rendezvous with the team, Jonathan and I set up for an 8 pm glide into the Aosta Valley. We were facing uphill into the shade of Mont Blanc, trying to hook into a gulley because it was literally the only way to get airborne! I remember Jonathan shouting, 'This isn't normal!' just before we launched. It was so hilarious in the moment that I actually needed five minutes to regain my composure and launch. That phrase truly summed up the entire race, and it's even more special now that Jonathan is no longer with us.

### **6. How do you approach mental preparation or staying motivated during long events?**

For mental preparation, I'd say I'm pretty much always 'on.' I'm constantly obsessing about flying, so there's a strong, almost subconscious level of preparation happening behind the scenes. But proactively,

I like to understand as much as I can about the race beforehand through research and visualize it the more I feel like I truly know the route, and that sense of familiarity brings a lot of confidence and a positive mental attitude. As for staying motivated, I've never needed much help with that. The challenge itself, the pursuit of maximizing a flight, and the desire to perform at my best in the world's toughest hike-and-fly competition are more than enough to keep me pushing.

**7. What's one piece of gear or habit you swear by in your hike-and-fly toolkit?**

Every single item in my hike-and-fly toolkit has to be something I swear by, otherwise, I simply won't carry it; extra weight is the enemy in the X-Alps. That being said, for flight gear, my Omega ULS is, in my opinion, the best X-Alps wing ever made. On the techy side, my XC Tracer Maxx vario is awesome. Just as importantly, a crucial habit I swear by is the incorporation of checklists into every routine. From packing my flying kit to pre-flight checks and race logistics, checklists are key to performance and safety when fatigue can lead to critical errors.

**8. What are you most looking forward to in this race?**

Honestly, getting to the point where all the intense preparation is finally done! It's a relief to transition from the endless training and logistics to simply focusing singularly on the daily goal: covering as much of the course as possible. The flow of full-on X-Alps flying is a unique state that's impossible to replicate at a recreational level – it's just pure, intense, strategic movement across the Alps. Additionally, a huge part of the excitement is also competing with the best hike-and-fly pilots in the world. Pushing ourselves against that caliber of talent is incredibly motivating.

Lastly, I'm looking forward to bringing it all together with my amazing team. So many people contribute to our success, and it simply wouldn't happen without them. I'm incredibly grateful to our partners and sponsors like Advance Paragliders, Pathfinder Asset Management, Paraglide Canada, Choose Health, Schoki Chocolate, and most importantly, Sheina Macadam and my family, who make this journey possible. To follow along when the X-Alps kicks off on Jun 15th, we'll be posting to my Instagram @flying.james and behind the scenes in our public team whatsapp chat. Stay tuned!