

Susan Interviewing Becky Durrell, professional cyclist

Susan: I believe you came to cycling quite late, didn't you?

Becky: Yes, that's right. I didn't start until I was, I think I was 25 or 26. I'm 32 now and that's relatively old, compared to most people who come into competitive sport. So it all started for me with a charity bike ride. I was raising money for the Alzheimer's Society one year and I decided, Oh! I'll sign up for a challenge which I'd seen in a magazine which was to ride from Newcastle to London in the UK in under 24 hours. So that's how it all started. France is already such a big cycling nation but I think England and the UK is a little bit behind and back then, I think, it was only just when cycling was starting to get really big. I just loved everything about it - the people I met and how community-based the sport is and you can go out with groups. It's a very social sport which a lot of people don't necessarily realise until they're involved in the sport and then from there I entered a few races and it just took off, really. It all just went really well and year on year I entered bigger races and got on bigger teams and that's kinda led me to where I am now and obviously, you know, the link with yourselves is that the team I was with last year, we came over and raced in Brittany which was great fun. It's been quite a rapid journey but it's been incredible - it's been life-changing. Cycling really is quite a unique sport in that respect.

Susan: The race you refer to, that's the KBE, the Kreiz Breizh Elite race that you took part in last year?

Becky: That's right, yes.

Susan: And you did really well in that?

Becky: Yes. I came fourth overall, which I was really pleased with. But we were in (I'm sure a lot of people are aware with cycling it's actually a very team focused sport) we were actually working for one of my team mates, Anna Henderson who, she's a real talent. She's quite young still and she's an up-and-coming professional and she's since signed for one of the world's biggest women's teams, actually off the back of last season. She came second overall and we were trying to get her to win by helping her in the race. Off the back of that I managed to come fourth overall. It was a great race and it was actually really tough racing. Each different race we go to in various countries, they all have their own unique dynamic but racing in Brittany is notoriously difficult actually. So it was definitely a challenging race but it was really good fun.



Susan: Why is it challenging in Brittany?

Becky: A lot of it is down to the quite rolling nature of the roads. I mean, you don't tend to get huge hills like you would in the Alps or whatever for example, but the roads seem to be up and down all the time, there wasn't much flat and it just, really saps your energy and as well the racing itself is very aggressive because the level of the race and the sort of teams it attracts there's quite a lot of different dynamics within the race and a lot of different abilities and people trying to win various classifications within the race itself. So it just adds up to a really exciting dynamic and it's quite unpredictable. I mean, in men's races in the professional scene, you often see that it's almost quite clinical. An early break will form and then if it's like a sprint finish stage and then it all comes back together and it gets exciting in the last kind of hour of the race. Whereas in women's cycling it tends to be a lot more aggressive and attacking because the races are shorter, and that was definitely the case in Brittany. You could never rest - there was nowhere to hide. It was a really tough couple of days out but really enjoyable as well.

Susan: Was that the first time you'd raced in Brittany?

Becky: It was, yes, actually. I didn't really know what to expect. I'd heard from other team mates who had previously raced in Brittany and they said that racing in Brittany is really difficult, it's really tough. You kind of go into a little bit of an unknown in that respect but yes, I was very pleasantly surprised. It's beautiful racing and the local communities are really supportive and glad to see us there, which is always a bonus.

Susan: Mmm

Becky: So I really enjoyed it and I'm really hoping we get to come back once the world has kind of gone back to some sort of normality, hopefully not in the too distant future.

Susan: You did really well last year didn't you, in Britain?

Becky: Yes, it was a really positive season. Last year I won the National Criterion Championships which is basically circuit racing so it's town centre racing where you do lots of laps in a town centre and the race usually lasts around 40 to 45 minutes. Very different from your normal 4 or 5 hour race, like, for example, we did in the stage race out in Brittany. So it's very fast and furious, it tends to favour the sprinters. I managed to win the National Championship for that last year which was a massive bonus. Yes, I had a lot of success in the circuit racing. And then also in the National Road Racing series which is a number of

road races over a few months over the season I was quite successful in that as well. So, overall, it was a really positive season. Women's cycling is a very different world to the men's side of sport. There's obviously a lot less money. For example, the team I'm on, technically we're a professional team because we have a professional licence, we race in all professional races yet by definition we're not professionals because we're not paid. We don't draw a salary from the team. We all have our own jobs, you know, that we need to live. You know, we need to get money some how. We don't earn a living through the team so there's still a very big divide between the men's and the women's side of things but it's natural; it's the way it is. It's definitely moving for the better. The sport is slowly but surely getting more parity and it's becoming a lot more equal. So, yeah hopefully, in, say, a decades time, it will be almost equal and the hope is that it goes that way.

Susan: Do you think the women's side of cycling is more like the men's used to be, many years ago before all the money got injected into it?

Becky: Yes, I think it is because with sports, a lot of it certainly in the women's side of the sport, and I think this is the way the men's used to be, a few decades ago, you were involved in the sport for the love of the sport. It wasn't necessarily a way to make money. It wasn't a solid way to get an income. So you did it because you were so passionate about it and that's obviously reflected in the racing itself which, I do think, is still true for a lot of the men's riders at the top level. But then again for a lot of them, it's their career, they are there to do a job, they are there to be basically an assistance to the leadrider on a team. So, it's just got a different dynamic, so, yes, I do think women's cycling is perhaps where men's used to be a few decades ago. It's very similar.

Susan: You did really well last year, didn't you?

Becky: Overall it was a very positive season. It went really well and I was really excited to see what was going to happen this season because I put a big training block in over winter and I had high hopes for this season but obviously a lot changed when the pandemic came about. Since then we've decided to have our family now as well. So yes, it all went very well and hopefully once baby's here and I get back into racing I can hopefully pick up where I left off and, and kind of, reach for bigger things as well. So we'll see.

Susan: Well, thank you very much, let's hope we see you racing over here in Brittany again.



Becky: Fingers crossed! I'd love to be back - definitely.

Susan: Thanks very much.

Becky: You're welcome!