

01. Raphaëla's preparation

Raphaëla Le Gouvello Education packet - Windsurfing solo across the Indian Ocean

<http://www.respectocean.com>



Life on board



Windsurfing for two months all alone in the middle of the ocean requires high-level preparation, both physical and mental... Raphaëla has prepared.

The demands of windsurfing

Windsurfing for seven or eight hours a day for several weeks requires great strength and endurance:

- ▶ Physical strength is needed to control the sail, especially in high winds that may last for hours.
- ▶ Balance is needed to stay upright on the sailboard. The joints of the lower extremities must constantly adapt to the board's movements: the ankles, knees, and even hips, are constantly in play.



Intense physical preparation

Raphaëla trained for many long months, learning to push the envelope of her physical capabilities. Although the windsurfer was in good physical condition to begin with, that wasn't enough for her current challenge. Raphaëla had to train very hard and very regularly to increase her personal reserves and learn to manage them properly. Her training enabled her to test the limits of her physical strength and endurance and surpass them.



Training program begun in January 2005

- ▶ Endurance training (two or three sessions per week):
 - Cycling: 1 to 1 and a half hours
 - Running: 30 to 45 minutes
 - Rowing: 15 to 25 minutes
 - Windsurfing
- ▶ Strength training:
 - Weight lifting (once a week)
- ▶ Core support training:
 - Strengthening the abdomen and lower back (by working the muscles of the stomach and back)
 - Improvement of reflexes in the lower extremities
 - Stretching exercises

Activities

- ▶ Name the muscles of the human body that you know.
- ▶ Which do you think are the main muscles used in windsurfing?
- ▶ Try to find a cutaway drawing of the human body and locate these muscles.

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Activities

- ▶ Make a list of the qualities you think a person would need before undertaking and successfully completing an athletic challenge such as Raphaëla's.
- ▶ Write about a personal experience that demanded physical or mental courage on your part.

During the crossing

Thanks to her training, Raphaëla will be in very good physical shape when she departs on her journey. During the weeks she spends crossing the ocean, she will have to manage her reserves and pay close attention to any sign of fatigue. Any lapse of attention, any sign of pain, may signal that she has begun to exceed her limits, which could be very dangerous for her.

Raphaëla must intersperse periods of physical activity with periods of rest and recuperation in order to hold out over the long haul. Sleep, rest, and nutrition will be her strongest allies during the crossing.

Mental strength

Mental preparation is crucial. Raphaëla must know herself well enough to anticipate what her reactions might be and master her emotions when necessary. She may encounter difficult conditions during the crossing: 3 to 4 days of extreme ocean and wind conditions could capsize her board, resulting in confinement in the "cabin," which will be transformed into a survival capsule... In short, she needs nerves of steel and total self mastery.

Which is just what Raphaëla worked to acquire in the months preceding her departure.

"Given the difficulties of this particular crossing and my previous experiences, I decided to take my preparation up a notch, combining physical preparation with serious mental preparation. We tried to anticipate the most nerve-racking situations possible and what I could do to overcome them mentally [...]. My entire technical team and I thought about daily routine gestures taken under extreme conditions [...] and about practicing simple relaxation and breathing exercises to cope with stress."

Raphaëla

Did you know?

"Proprioception" is the ability of the brain to be constantly aware of the body's position in space. If Raphaëla's board is tossed around in rough weather, the development of this capacity will be very useful to her.

Keeping panic at bay

Raphaëla must face the possibility of various kinds of events: storms, accidents, breakdowns, encounters with sharks...

Mental training consists of anticipating events and finding solutions in advance. Leave nothing to chance!

Relaxation techniques must also be used to rapidly regain equilibrium, mental clarity and physical release after a frightening experience.

