

## **Benjamin Robert, 800m**

### Français:

J'ai préparé cette saison différemment. Je suis parti avec un groupe de sprint avec Laurent Meuwly, le groupe néerlandais, en Afrique du Sud. Donc on va dire j'ai un nouveau corps et je suis curieux de savoir ce que ça va donner demain. Pendant trois semaines j'ai fait des séances complètement différentes de ce que j'ai l'habitude de faire. Une nouvelle ambiance, je me suis vraiment régalé avec leur groupe qui m'a accueilli à bras ouvert. J'ai découvert ce que c'était le sprint auprès de Femke, de Klamer, qui m'ont suivi d'ailleurs, et les mecs aussi.

Demain j'aurais envie de gagner la course et faire un gros chrono, mais, je ne sais pas ce que je vaudrai, donc je suis assez curieux. Je vous avoue que je voulais faire mieux à Metz. Un 800m est différent d'un 600m. La forme est là, je ne ferai donc pas une contre-performance non plus. J'ai des super jambes et je suis curieux de voir ce qui va se passer demain. Après, il y aura les championnats de France. Quand on voit le championnat de France, on sait qu'il y a du niveau. On a vu Yanis qui a fait 1:43.94, il y a Azzedine aussi qui a fait 1:43.90, et Gabriel, finaliste au jeu et finaliste mondial.

Puis il y a les championnats du monde, peut-être Madrid entre les deux. Les Mondiaux sont vraiment l'événement majeur de cet hiver et j'irai pour gagner. C'est sûr que l'an dernier je passe pas loin de la médaille d'or. D'ailleurs le vainqueur est là demain donc je vais essayer de me rattraper. Glasgow est une bonne étape en vue des Jeux Olympiques, je veux être champion olympique donc si je finis 3ème des championnats du monde ça ne corrèle pas forcément avec ce que je veux réussir en été. Cette année est assez particulière parce qu'il y a les Jeux Olympiques de Paris. On y pense, c'est un peu l'événement majeur pour un sportif français dans sa carrière. Mais il faut faire attention parce que l'extra pression va nous motiver plus. Mais il ne faut pas trop se crispier non plus. Cette saison hivernale va être un bon test avant les Jeux Olympiques.

À Toulouse je m'entraîne avec les coureurs de 1500m Benoît Campion et Pierrick Jocteur-Monrozier. C'est un bon compromis de s'entraîner avec eux, ils ont déjà fait de très gros chronos cet hiver donc ça m'oblige d'aller vite sur le long aussi, sinon je me retrouve tout seul derrière. J'ai un coach qui préfère amener le 800m par le 1500m et là on voulait plus travailler notre vitesse en vue de la saison. L'an dernier on trouvait qu'il nous manquait un peu de vitesse donc on a demandé à Laurent s'il pouvait nous aider. Le 800 on le sait tous c'est un peu la discipline hybride entre le demi-fond et le sprint. C'est pour ça qu'on veut progresser partout

Je me rappelle la première fois que j'ai couru à ce meeting en 2018. C'était la première fois de ma vie où je faisais un meeting qui était télévisé. Mes parents m'avaient vu à la télé, donc c'était assez original. Au début, mon père me disait « Profite un maximum. Ce n'est pas tous les jours que tu feras un meeting comme ça ». Aujourd'hui, je suis sur l'affiche du meeting. Je remercie Jean-Pierre Watelle, l'organisateur. Quand on voit tous les noms qu'il y a eu sur ce meeting, tous les records du monde qui ont été faits, c'est le plus grand meeting du monde.

### English :

The next part of the season starts with the 800m tomorrow with the objective to see where I am now. I worked differently during the off-season, I trained with Laurent Meuwly's group of sprinters in South Africa. I have a new body and I want to see how it will go tomorrow. The goal is to win the race and to establish the best time possible.

My main objectives for this indoor season are the meeting of Liévin and the World Indoor Championships of Glasgow. Last year I almost got the gold medal during the European

Indoor Championships in Istanbul. By the way, my opponent will be here tomorrow, I will try to take my revenge tomorrow. This year is pretty special with the Olympics in Paris, even more so as a French athlete. But I need to be careful because the extra pressure can be negative. It will motivate me more but it can also tense me up. This winter season will be a good test before the Olympic Games.

In Toulouse I train along 1500m runners Benoit Campion and Pierrick Jockey-Monrozier. They have already done very big times this winter so it forces me to go fast along too, otherwise I find myself alone behind. With my coach we are used to prepare the 800m with a 1500m approach. Last year we thought we were a little slow so we asked Laurent if he could help us. The 800 we all know is the hybrid discipline between the middle distance and the sprint. That's why we want to progress everywhere

I remember the first time I ran at that meeting in 2018. It was the first time in my life that I had a meeting that was televised. My parents had seen me on TV, so it was quite original. At first, my father would say, "Make the most of it. It's not every day that you will have a meeting like this." Today, I am on the poster of the meeting. I thank Jean-Pierre Watelle, the meeting organizer. When you see all the names which have competed here, all the world records that were broken, this is the biggest meeting in the world.

### **Grant Holloway, 60m Hurdles**

Obviously the expectation tomorrow is just to come out here, compete, have fun and walk out as a winner. I'll be using this indoor season to get me ready for the World Indoor Championships in Glasgow. Training's been going well, I'm healthy, I'm happy, my team and I, we've been working very hard just to continue to put out those fast and punchy times and those that make the resume more impressive. So, I'm excited for tomorrow. I was able to get on the track here earlier today and the track felt great, so, can't wait to rip it up tomorrow.

Liévin is very special. When I was a rookie, it was one of my first meets I came to, so I'm looking forward to that. Also, the meet director, Jean Pierre Watelle, is a great guy. So, whenever he has track meets, I know I'll be the first hurdler he calls. I just want to be able to give him the same love and respect that he gives me. I'm excited to do this for year four and keep it going.

Consistency is the biggest thing for me. Not just as a hurdler, but just in the outside life as well. I'm just staying consistent in everything that I do. Whether it's on the track, off the track, in everyday life, with friends, with family, with people that know me. Everybody knows I have a bubbly, outgoing personality, so just with training and everything that I've done, I'm always just figuring out ways to continue to get better and as well as just always finding ways to continue to improve my work ethic.

The golf tournament I organized some months ago was just to raise money for families that are in less fortunate situations than myself. We were able to raise \$32,000 and to be able to give that out to help people in that holiday season, it was great.

You are always going to have some type of things to disconnect from track and field because if you do track and field 24/7, you're going to wonder why you're burnt out.

I would love to run another 4x400m. But it's in the hands of the USATF and they like to keep my talents in a box. So, as long as they keep me in a box, that's where I'm going to stay. But as soon as they let me fly like a flamingo, I'll be good. I got to spread my wings sometimes. I would love to run a 400m.

I've not been working so much on my technique, but just outside of the track. I was able to switch my strength and conditioning program, so it was something new in that aspect. Other

than that, technique and Coach Holloway and I are still working hand-in-hand. We're still having fun with each other. We're still learning from each other. This will be year eight with us together, so obviously, we continue to grow that coach-athlete relationship. Every year, we continue just to get better, and every year, we find ways to continue to keep putting out those punchy fast times. I've been a pro for five years and I did the collegiate season, but within my five years as a pro, three-time world champion, world indoor champion, 12.81 in the 110mH, 7.29 in the 60mH, I think it's just the accolades that'll continue to pile up and obviously, we make a great team.

I'm looking forward to this season. Obviously, we have a new young Thundercat here running his first indoor meet this season (Erryion Knighton). I just wanted to come to this meet, show him a thing or two on how to run the Indoor 200m. All I'm saying is if he doesn't run 20.69 or faster, I'm going to tell him I'm faster than him in all the sports. Not only in the 200, but in everything else.

### **Erryion Knighton, 200m**

The reason I haven't ran an indoor meet ever in my life before is because where I grew up in the United States, in Florida, we don't have an indoor track. We just got one in Gainesville, which is probably the first one ever. I'm not at high school anymore, so I never got a chance to run indoors. The reason I'm here is to finally get my first indoor meet and obviously run faster than 20.69.

This probably will be my only indoor competition this year, so I just want to see how I feel. If I like the way I run indoors tomorrow, I'll probably add more to my schedule in the next few years. If I had an event that I'd try to qualify for, it'd probably be the 400m. I'd try the 60m because I never did it before.

### **Sam Kendricks, Pole Vault**

The indoor season is a great way to experiment with how your training has gone so far. My routine as an athlete is very difficult because it's jump, travel, rest, jump and so on. Sometimes we have only 48 hours between the meetings. The Indoor season is always a challenge: you battle for your fitness, and so I try to get stronger every meeting.

This will be my 501st meeting, and that gives you a lot of perspective about what the sport is and isn't. Sometimes people get disappointed that they can't make the championship or they can't reach the gold status level. But I see as I travel, every meeting is growing with the intention of putting on the best event that they possibly can. It's special as an athlete to be taken care of everywhere you go, because when I feel my best, I jump my best.

Where I come from, track and field is a team sport. We have our jumper, thrower, distance runner and sprinter. But when you become a professional, you give up the team. Everyone wears a different uniform and only do they come together maybe once or twice a year, if you're lucky. And so you inevitably fall back. And so family is very important. You find your family on the track and you have your family off the track.

It's a challenge of every athlete to grow during their career. Sometimes athletes feel dispossessed at the end of their career. I can't sell the laurels that I've won. They're mine alone. And maybe they're not even appreciated by everyone back home. It's a challenge mentally that every athlete has to come to grips with. And I think my challenge is to grow on and off the track. And sometimes athletes grow their way out of the sport. No matter how good they are, they may just not find enough opportunity. And I want to create more opportunities. So I started a landscaping business. I know that sounds funny, cutting grass.

But I was in the Army for a long time. And that gave me a very blue-collar mentality about track as well as professional life. If you put the hours in, you get the reward for it on the way back. And so being able to employ a group of young men as well as maybe in the future through my coaching endeavors being able to have extra work for my athletes to do is very important to me.

And so after the Olympics in 2021, when I was ousted, I realized this could come to a crashing halt very quickly. I needed to find something else to do. So I created my own track and field facility thanks to my landscaping business. If you ever come to Mississippi you'll see the most beautiful private pole vault training facility in the entire world. And it's mine. You'll get to see more about it this year.

### **Margot Chevrier, Pole Vault**

#### Français :

J'ai changé de groupe d'entraînement il n'y a pas très longtemps, je m'étais dit au début que l'hiver c'était vraiment la saison pour s'acclimater et puis quasiment la première compétition de la saison, je fais 4,63 m donc mes objectifs de l'hiver ont changé. Le but c'est de sauter le plus haut possible, de faire les minimas pour Paris et ça permettrait de commencer l'été un peu plus en détente et de pouvoir choisir les compétitions plus stratégiquement. Ensuite j'ai forcément Glasgow dans un coin de la tête, je crois qu'il me manque une seule place au ranking pour me qualifier donc j'aimerais profiter de chaque compétition.

Le plus dur cet hiver c'était le déménagement, qui a été fait en 3-4 semaines. En arrivant là bas j'ai mis mes études entre parenthèses donc j'avais que le côté personnel et sportif à gérer et ça s'est très bien passé. Ensuite avec mon nouveau coach je savais déjà que ça allait bien se passer et pour l'instant ça marche plutôt bien donc je suis très contente.

Je n'ai pas fait de gros changements dans ma technique car on est à 9 mois des JO, on essaye surtout d'être plus solide à l'impulsion parce que c'est souvent ça qui m'a fait défaut et puis d'être plus solide tout court en muscu, sur la course et donc forcément enchaîner les concours plus facilement.

Je suis en 5ème année de médecine et ce n'était pas forcément l'année à se concentrer sur autre chose que le sport même si j'ai des aménagements donc c'était tout à fait faisable. Mais avec le déménagement c'était beaucoup plus compliqué, donc je me suis dit qu'il valait mieux que je mette de côté les études, le CHU et de reprendre une fois que les Jeux seraient passés.

Mes études me prennent beaucoup de temps, ça demande beaucoup d'aménagement et d'organisation. Une fois que mon système est installé j'ai deux fois moins de stages que les autres étudiants en temps horaire et mes partiels sont étalés aussi. Je fais une année en deux ans donc ça me laisse quand même le temps de m'entraîner, de faire toute ma récupération. Sur les périodes de congés je peux poser plus que les autres étudiants donc ça me permet de partir en compétition et en stage quand il faut. Ça ne me perturbe pas de reprendre les études en septembre et en même temps c'est un nouveau quotidien, j'ai le temps de faire beaucoup de choses sur le côté perso et sportif donc c'est chouette.

Je continue à réviser mes cours, je n'ai pas d'obligation parce que je n'ai pas d'exams ni mon stage à l'hôpital mais je prends quand même de l'avance car tout ce que je fais cette année me laisse mon cadre et mon quotidien que j'avais avant. Et en même temps je n'aurai pas à faire l'année prochaine ce que je fais là donc ça me permet de faire la transition et de prendre un peu d'avance pour les prochaines années, parce qu'il y aura toujours des championnats et des compétitions sur lesquelles je voudrais être performante.

Avec Gabriel, mon petit ami, on ne fait pas n'est pas la même discipline mais en même temps on a le même rythme de vie. Il faut faire attention à quand est-ce qu'on dort, comment on dort et finalement ça fait du bien de ne pas faire la même chose, parce que quand on rentre à la maison de l'entraînement, le coaching est terminé et on essaie de comprendre ce que l'autre fait. Ça aide aussi à apprendre des autres disciplines et là où ça nous apporte énormément c'est qu'on vit les mêmes championnats donc le gros stress et la pression qui pourrait être là on ne l'a pas forcément parce qu'on en a un petit peu toujours à la maison. Que ça se passe bien ou moins bien, on comprend complètement les obligations et choix de chacun, il n'y a pas vraiment besoin de s'expliquer et c'est hyper naturel parce qu'on a le même projet.

#### English:

Knowing that I changed training groups not very long ago, I told myself at the beginning that winter was really the season to acclimatize. And in fact, at almost the first competition of the season, I jumped 4.63m so my goals for the winter have changed. And now it's to jump as high as possible, to jump the qualifying mark for Paris. It would be a good thing done and it would allow me to start the summer with a little more relaxation and to be able to choose the competitions more strategically. And then I necessarily have Glasgow in the back of my mind I think I'm missing only one place in the ranking so I would like to take the opportunity to finish on the best possible place tomorrow.

The change of coach has gone very well. The hardest was finally the move in 3-4 weeks and then in fact when I arrived I put my studies on hold. So now I have only myself as an athlete to manage which went very very well. So basically the goal is that at 9 months from the Games we will not change everything so technically we try to be more solid to the impulse because that is often what is lacking and then to be more solid at all in muscle, on the race and therefore necessarily chain competitions more easily. To be much more stable and reliable and to have performances of high level much more often.

Yes I am in 5th year of medicine so it was not necessarily the year to focus on something other than sport and I have amenities so it was quite feasible until the move. It was much complicated and I thought it was better that I acclimate to the new side of studies once the Games are over. It does not bother me to resume in September and at the same time it is a new daily, I have time to do a lot of things anyway, as much on my side as on the athlete so it's nice. I keep revising my classes, I do not have the obligation because I do not have an exam and I do not have an internship in the hospital but I still get ahead because I tell myself that everything I do this year it already leaves me my framework and my daily life that I had before and at the same time I will not have to do it next year so it makes it possible to transition and get a little ahead for the next years because there will always be championships, there will always be competitions.

My partner is not competing in the same event but at the same time we have the same rhythm of life because we must be careful when we sleep, how we sleep. It feels good not to be in the same discipline already because when we come home, the coaching is over. There only an exchange on our sports to understand what the other does, learn a little bit too from other events and in fact where it brings us a lot is that we are living the same championships so already this big stress and pressure that could be there we do not necessarily feel it because we always have a little side of home that is with us. When it goes well and when it does not go well we fully understand the obligations, certain choices, and so there is not even necessarily the need to explain them, it's natural because we have the same project.

#### **Femke Bol, 400m**

Lievin was a really nice competition last year, so I'm happy to be back. The season started out great. When you did your first race, you can build on it. So we want a few things to go

better, and I will try this tomorrow. And I think it will be a really nice race, also together with Lieke Klaver and Amandine Brossier. After Liévin I will be running the nationals, it's the first time it's completely sold out, that's amazing and will be a lot of fun. We will work from every race to try to do better. And it's indoor, so you never know. You can run a good race, if it's tactical, anything can happen. I like to do indoors to just race a bit and get out of my training routine.

We didn't change a lot in our training approach, because what we do is working. It's going really well, so we're happy about this. And of course last year was a big change for me in the hurdles with a change in the strides. This year I can just try to perfect it. I know now how to do it. It's a new way of doing the training. So it's working out well, and I'm really enjoying it.

What makes the Dutch Team perform so well is that we are all training together in Papendal? This makes you stronger, because you have each other. You have the best of the country, best of the world even, to train with, but also to learn from and inspire each other and motivate each other every day. I think that's just a really big team spirit, and we enjoy it all so much on the track. I think this is one of the secrets. And of course, the coaches.

We just always try to find out what is the best possible race for me in the 400m Hurdles. And we don't know if this ever will be the world record. I could see progress in my speed, with the 200m already, so that's really nice. And for the rest, you can always work on your technique with the hurdles. I can always get stronger. So I listen to my coaches and they will tell me what to do. And I trust them and then hopefully get better.

I'm enjoying the 400m hurdles now a lot. I must say I did like the 500m, but it was only 100m longer. We will see, if maybe one day I will race the 800m. But for now, I'm liking the 400m and the 400m goes very well.

### **Katie Moon, Pole Vault**

It's great to be back in Liévin. It's just such a good meet to come back. The results speak for themselves. I've never had a bad competition here, knock on wood. It's a great runway, a great atmosphere. I wanted to be very intentional with my indoor season this year and only jump at meets that were really good facilities and really good runways or convenient to get to. Like last week I went to my alma mater university and my family got to come watch. So this one was just a no-brainer.

To be honest, I really don't have any expectations for tomorrow other than just executing what I've been working on in training. And I think if I can do that, then the 80-plus bars should be good. I would love to, of course, come out and jump a world lead. And I would love to jump a personal best. I've never jumped a 90 bar since I first did it back in 2018 indoors. But I really just want to execute. This season everything is aimed towards the Olympics and for the U.S. athletes just making the Olympic team.

I've worked on some technical aspects. In the pole vault, I feel like there's always things that you can improve upon. And so even though I've been very happy with how my last several years have gone, there's more that we can get better at. I am working on my takeoff, that moment when I take off the ground, it's all about moving through as efficiently as possible, transferring that energy as efficiently as possible.

I'm very aware that I have not won a World Indoor Title yet and it's very much a goal of mine. My husband is from England, U.K., and so his family could get to come. So there's a lot of reasons that I would love to make that Glasgow team.

I have to give a lot of credit to my coach and just how he trains and prepares me and we're always physically peaking at championships. I've just been very fortunate in the way my body responds during a championship. I cannot replicate it anywhere else. It's just the adrenaline, that moment of just being on the runway in a championship, there is something that happens to my body. I don't know what it is. I'm very lucky and I feel very fortunate that I have that in me. It's probably a combination of things.

### **Hughes Fabrice Zango, Triple Jump**

First of all, it's up to me to say welcome to you because Liévin is really a track I've been in since 2018 and as soon as the track was reopened, I trained on it until 2023. It feels like home. Whenever there is the triple jump here I'll try to be present, and being present means to me winning in front of my audience. My ambition is to repeat a victory and show my ambitions for this year 2024 which will be just beautiful with the Olympic Games and the World Indoor Championships. 2018 were my first World Indoors in Birmingham where I finished sixth. I wasn't that strong at the time. But with what I was able to do last year and the previous years, I am rather confident that the gold medal is to be expected in Glasgow. I am quite confident, I work quietly.

Training with Teddy Tamgho who got back at it not so long ago who even announced his return is great. I think in a month or more we'll see him jump. He coaches me and I coach him, we help each other at this level. It's a double role for me too which teaches me things about coaching and training in general.

I think that just blabbing, talking about motivation, determination, is really fib for me. I think there is a question of method and learning to study, learning to learn, it's very important for me to save time. That's what's often missing, the problem with methodology is that people can't even reconcile sport and education. With this PhD, there are a lot of things that I will put in place but for the next six months, I will put my diploma on the side to prepare for the Olympic Games in a very, very serious way. After the Olympic Games, I'm going to bring back this parchment. Of course, beautiful things are ahead.

In the future I will ensure a technology transfer between Africa and Europe because I have lived many years in Africa and I know a lot of things there. And I know that right now, it's very interesting to have profiles like mine to be able to ensure this tech transfer. We have joint projects with the company with which I did my PhD and we are studying the possibilities of the future.

For the Olympic Games I clearly want to win the first gold medal for Burkina Faso and for Africa in the triple jump discipline. I must say that I have arguments for that. All my progress in recent years makes me more or less confident than I am. This year, I have a 99.99% chance of winning.

I hope Teddy can qualify too but for now he's getting ready. He still has a lot of things to go through and steps to complete for him to come back. We will see what he will do in a month. And as we go along, we will adapt for him. But what's sure, is that I am gonna beat him.