



AUDE LEMORDANT: LE CHAMPION

NAME Aude Lemordant
AGE 32
NATIONALITY French
OCCUPATION Airline pilot
AIRLINE Air France
RANK First Officer
TOTAL HOURS FLOWN 6500
TOTAL AEROBATIC HOURS FLOWN 500



AS A GIRL GROWING UP IN FRANCE, AUDE LEMORDANT DREAMED OF BEING A PROFESSIONAL PILOT. NOW A BOEING 777 PILOT FOR AIR FRANCE, THE 32-YEAR-OLD HAS CERTAINLY ACHIEVED THAT DREAM. BUT BEING AN AIRLINE PILOT ISN'T ENOUGH FOR THE AMBITIOUS FRENCHWOMAN, WHO ALSO HOLDS THE DISTINCTION OF BEING THE WORLD AEROBATICS CHAMPION.

INTERVIEW DEREK ROYAL

“winning is not the most rewarding aspect”

WHEN DID YOU FIRST SHOW AN INTEREST IN AVIATION AND WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A PILOT?

I started flying with gliders at the age of 14. I thought that a cockpit was the most amazing office I could ever imagine, so I decided to make a career of it!

WERE YOU THE KIND OF GIRL WHO ATTENDED AIR SHOWS, BUILT MODEL AEROPLANES AND READ BOOKS ABOUT FLYING?

Not really. I did show an interest in aviation in general but it was when I started flying gliders that I really discovered the joy of flight, and so my interest really grew from there.

DID YOU DREAM OF BEING AN AIRLINE PILOT BEFORE YOU SHOWED AN INTEREST IN AEROBATICS?

I enjoyed flying so much that I first thought of making it my job so I could fly as much as possible. That led me to aerobatics because as part of the training to become an airline pilot you train on an aerobatic aircraft.

WHAT FLYING JOBS DID YOU HAVE BEFORE BECOMING AN AIRLINE PILOT?

I used to tow gliders with light aircraft. Then I became a flight instructor at an aero club. I went on to fly for a company on aircraft used for pipeline checks, so quite varied, but a great way to get a lot of experience in the air.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR JOB AS AN AIRLINE PILOT?

Being an airline pilot is a very fulfilling job. I really enjoy flying heavy aircraft, managing very long flights, managing the crew and flying in so many different countries. I vividly remember going into the Airbus A320 for a first flight – (No passengers!). The funny thing is that it was in Chateauroux Airport, which is where the World Aerobatics Championships will be held next year...

I really enjoyed being a flight instructor as well, although I think that for the flight instructor, having the student fly for the first time is even more stressful than for the students' themselves!

I BELIEVE YOU CURRENTLY FLY THE BOEING 777. WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT THIS AIRCRAFT?

This is a very good aircraft. It is a very safe aircraft and in terms of ergonomics really it is conceived with a pilot philosophy. It is an aircraft with many modern systems; this technical part is very interesting for me even if we are flying with the autopilot during cruise.

TELL ME ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN FLYING AN AIRLINER AND COMPETING IN WORLD-CLASS AEROBATICS COMPETITION?

All aircraft, whether it is a very heavy one or a sport aircraft, are flying according to the same rules. Just the use and purpose is not the same and you fly the aircraft according to its certification and capabilities. For instance the Boeing 777 carrying passengers can take off with a weight of up to 347 tonnes, with a wingspan of 65 metres – so it's a completely different experience when it's just you in your aerobatic aircraft weighing only 870 kg! My Extra is so much more manoeuvrable, the roll rate is 420 degrees per second – I wouldn't even think about trying to roll a 777! The aerobatic aircraft is so much more reactive than the airliner; when I am flying passengers on the 777 there is much more inertia, I need to anticipate much further in advance, and be smoother on the controls.

WHAT DO YOUR AIRLINE COLLEAGUES THINK OF YOUR EXPLOITS AS AN AEROBATICS CHAMPION?

Well I actually have no clue ... I keep my jobs very separate because they are so different.

YOU FLY THE EXTRA 330SC IN AEROBATICS COMPETITION. WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS AIRCRAFT?

It is like Formula One but in the air. It is an aircraft with a very wide flight envelope, which allows a huge panel of manoeuvres. I love just seeing the earth from different positions and trying new manoeuvres and to have this feeling of knowing the aircraft by heart. I remember the first time I took off in an aerobatic aircraft and I was up in the air before having time to set it to full power!

OPPOSITE LEFT: AUDE LEMORDANT: A REMARKABLE WOMAN - AIRLINE PILOT AND WORLD AEROBATICS CHAMPION.
OPPOSITE RIGHT: "I LOVE JUST SEEING THE EARTH FROM DIFFERENT POSITIONS AND TRYING NEW MANOEUVRES AND TO HAVE THIS FEELING OF KNOWING THE AIRCRAFT BY HEART."
ABOVE: GOAL: "TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVE MY SKILLS AND TO PERFECT AS CLOSE TO PERFECT AS I CAN EVERY TIME."

HOW MANY AEROBATICS COMPETITIONS DO YOU COMPETE IN PER YEAR?

I usually do two: the French nationals and the international competition (one year the Europeans; the other, the Worlds). The rest of the time I fly at air shows, and on the airliners.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR AN AEROBATICS COMPETITION?

Best preparation is flying - training and training. Then you need a good physical health. A great sport to help to train you mentally as well as physically is golf, so I try and play as much as I can.

DO YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC TRAINING REGIMEN TO PREPARE YOUR BODY FOR THE RIGOURS OF AEROBATIC COMPETITION?

I need to take part in plenty of exercise and sport, and to be careful to have the right nutrition and to keep hydrated. I do whatever sport I can, according to my schedule and where I am in the world. I try to focus on cardio training and I pay attention to building up muscle.

DO YOU HAVE A PARTICULAR NUTRITIONAL PLAN AS PART OF YOUR TRAINING REGIMEN?

Over the years you get to know what suits you best. Then you have to adapt on the day. Sustenance is so important to keep you mentally alert and your body ready to withstand the g forces and physical strains of aerobatics so we are very diligent when it comes to eating before a flight or competition.

WHAT QUALITIES ARE NEEDED TO BE A WORLD-CLASS AEROBATICS PILOT?

I think the same as in any kind of sport at high level. Keep being motivated over the years, because it is a huge investment. Set goals and be ready to adapt.

YOU'RE THE REIGNING WORLD AEROBATICS CHAMPION. WHAT GAVE YOU THE MOST SATISFACTION ABOUT WINNING THAT TITLE?

It may sound weird but winning is not the most rewarding aspect. It is having the opportunity to train over and over again, to improve my skills. This gives me the most satisfaction.

APART FROM WINNING THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, WHAT HAS BEEN THE HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR AEROBATICS CAREER?

I was lucky to have exceptional people to teach me how to fly and to train me in aerobatics; I am looking



"WINNING IS NOT THE MOST REWARDING (ASPECT) OF BEING A WORLD CHAMPION. IT IS HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRAIN OVER AND OVER AGAIN, TO IMPROVE MY SKILLS."

forward to the next World Championships' as it will be on home soil, especially as it will be held at the airfield where I took my first flight on a heavy aircraft! I have flown in many different places in France, meeting lots of great people who have been supporting me over the years.

DO PILOTS ON THE ELITE AEROBATICS CIRCUIT DEVELOP FRIENDSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER OR IS IT TOO COMPETITIVE FOR FRIENDSHIPS?

At high competition level you get to know each other. We do form friendships of course but once we climb into the cockpit we all become very competitive and want to perform the best. If I weren't doing aerobatics I would miss the other pilots and all the people around the events and training camps more than the actual competition.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF BEING AN ELITE AEROBATICS PILOT?

Trying to fly better always even if it becomes really difficult to see improvement as we are working on such small details.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE MOST SATISFACTION AS AN AEROBATICS PILOT?

To continually improve my skills and to perform the manoeuvres as close to perfect as I can every time.

IS THERE AN AIRCRAFT YOU'VE NEVER FLOWN BEFORE THAT YOU'D LOVE TO FLY?

Flying a new aircraft is always a pleasure no matter what type of aircraft. I would love to have more formation experience. I admire the Breitling Jet Team. I think it would be amazing to share the skies with other pilots and aircraft in close formation.

WHAT IS YOUR SINGLE-MOST SATISFYING AVIATION EXPERIENCE?

Flying is always satisfying, and the best thing about it is diversity.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES AND INTERESTS OUTSIDE AVIATION?

I love discovering new things, new people and different cultures, so I like to travel - this is why being an airline pilot is such a perfect job for me!

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR AUDE LEMORDANT AS AN AIRLINE PILOT AND AN AEROBATICS PILOT?

The good thing is not to know about it! I like to take it as it comes!

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE BREITLING WATCH?

I love all watches and what I like is that you will always find one that suits you. My favourite one though is the Chronomat that I won in the last World Championships in Texas, this has a special meaning for me!

FINALLY, IF I WERE TO INTERVIEW A GROUP OF YOUR FRIENDS, HOW WOULD THEY DESCRIBE YOU?

Go for it! ✨