

# What's the rush!

THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF THREE ARTICLES DEALING WITH PROGRESSION, HASTE AND MOTIVATION AT ALL EXPERIENCE LEVELS WITHIN SKYDIVING. BY TIM BATES, VPC STATE COACH

## "What is the rush?"

It's a simple question and one that crops up in many different contexts in our skydiving activities.

If we break it down from a few different angles, we find there are many circumstances where actually stopping and asking ourselves or each other, "Mate, what's the rush?" can have a beneficial and sometimes lifesaving influence.

To get a grip on where we are starting from let's look at some definitions of the word "rush", lifted here for convenience from the online dictionary.com website:

### Rush:

1. the act of moving hurriedly and in a careless manner;
2. done under pressure ["a rush job"];
3. the intense/pleasurable sensation experienced immediately after use of a stimulant.

Lots of experiences spring to mind, don't they?! Let's explore a few of these in a skydiving context, using the dictionary definitions as an anchor to the real world, where our aim is to *live, enjoy and learn as we go*, in that order.

### 1. The act of moving hurriedly and/or in a careless manner

This began as jigsaw pieces stimulated by Brian Germain's article 'The Long Haul' published in ASM Issue 25.

Skydivers are driven toward wanting to be good, or better, or 'the best' at what they do and sometimes this sees people to attempt great quantum leaps in skill development, sometimes referred to as "going hard" – and something we've almost all seen or tried at one stage in our jumping lives.

But let's face it - becoming 'one of the best' in skydiving is usually a LONG journey, but rarely a well-planned one.

Skydivers who are already at the top of a particular discipline or skill, be it freeflying, instructing, canopy piloting, 4-way or any other area have invariably been doing it for a long time and with good reason.

Acquisition of freefall and canopy skills is a constant process of discovering, understanding, trying out and adapting or 'personalising' new skills. We try to do this in a window of sixty-odd seconds of freefall, followed by a couple of minutes under canopy, all of which are skewed by various degrees of sensory overload which still affects even the most experienced skydivers in new or unusual situations.

Let's flipside for a moment to consider the emerging jumper be they young or young-at-heart. These motivated skydivers are seeking to establish themselves within a tight-knit community where 'experience and skill' are two very different yardsticks by which we measure who is 'good' or 'better', or on their way to becoming 'one of the best'.

(Skill and experience, while often grouped loosely together, are two measures of progress that are NOT cast together in concrete. Wind tunnels are a perfect example – great freefall skills, with low jump experience.)

Want to get somewhere quickly? Our western culture encourages you to "buy the sports car" and drive in the fast lane that will quickly take you down the road to becoming the best, although you may barely know how to drive and hence crash on the first sharp corner.

In skydiving terms, we see something more like jumpers crashing "deep in the corner" and put their goals, or indeed their lives, on ice, for good.

Be realistic, if this happens then your chances of ever becoming one of the best are fading steadily with each incident!

So how does a keen, motivated and emerging skydiver get on top of this, so they can really feel like they are making progress and on their way to becoming one of the best?

Here are a couple of practical tips and tools you can use to get on top and stay on top, as you progress down the road of experience...

- 1) **Prepare for a long journey.** Mentally, financially, emotionally, and physically. Remember Brian's article and his comment about the "old you" telling the "younger you" to "stop trashing my body!"
- 2) **Find, then study a map.** This may be a mentor, or coach, or a role model who has already reached some similar goals to the ones you are seeking and who can help you plan your own journey. There are heaps of these people in Australian skydiving, in every state, from every discipline, of every age. Find them! Talk to them! They may save you time, money, pain and maybe even some heartache!
- 3) **Choose the right car that will get you where you want to go** (and is one you can afford to drive!) This is about choosing the right tools and equipment for the right job and not necessarily the most expensive equipment! Take the time to learn how it works, be it your rig, your camera, your canopy or your audible alti. This goes hand in hand with planning your journey, as running out of cash or emotional petrol will stop you dead in your tracks, just like a serious injury.
- 4) **Coaches and mentors are like bridges and short cuts along your road**, helping you to make 'quantum leaps' over and around the roadblocks and bottlenecks that would otherwise slow you down. As you jump more, your personal skills will improve with time and practice and you can then steadily pick up the pace a little. Making key decisions without guidance can be like a frozen river crossing. It may look okay and you may just make it, but if the ice cracks half way across, then your journey is **over**.
- 5) **Use mileposts to measure and prove to yourself that you are progressing!** This is one of the best techniques for staying motivated that I learned from the gurus at the Victorian Institute of Sport. Mileposts are a long list of very short-term, step-by-step, easily achieved goals that measure and track your skill development and your real progress toward the goal of becoming 'one of the best'.

The milepost technique mentioned above helped a young Aussie sailor named Rohan Veal reach his goal of becoming a World Champion in the 'Moth' Sailing Class. Here's how:

Knowing only a little about sailing, Rohan made a long list of skills he would need to learn and then build upon, until he eventually *became a knowledgeable and skilled pilot* at the helm of his hi-tech hydrofoil Moth class boat. Rohan's *gear was top-notch* and this was *matched by his knowledge of the environment* (and the weather) in which he was competing.

Next, he made another long list, consisting of all the people he would need to defeat on his journey toward winning the World Championships. With both lists either at his bedside or with him in his wallet, Rohan started a journey and began crossing skills or competitors off the lists, one by one, all the way to the very top of his class in world sailing.

When he was occasionally asked why his journey was taking so long, he'd answer, "What's the rush?", with the track record and skills to prove it.

Until next time, when I look at:

**rush** 2: something done under pressure ["a rush job"]