

Flying Dutchman: the Edgar de Wit interview.

Contributed by easyrider2004
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We're proud to present an interview of the fastest man in the Netherlands, Edgar de Wit. Taken in their native Dutch tongue by interviewer Ayatollah Musa, this article has been translated for us by Aya, and edited a very little for clarity.

While surfing the internet a few years ago, I saw a Dutch name on the IGSA ranking list. Since The Netherlands is most probably the flattest country in the world, I got intrigued by the fact that there was a streetluger living somewhere in The Netherlands. How is that possible? Who is he and where is he riding?! One email and a few months later, I got in contact with him: Edgar de Wit.

It turned out that Edgar is an accomplished racer, determined to enjoy himself and go fast, regardless of the geography of his home. He's a top-ranked IGSA racer and a fun guy to spend time with — so much so that I've recently joined his race team for 2006. Recently, Edgar and I ate dinner at a Turkish restaurant, and I took this interview for Silverfish Longboarding. Click and read on, here comes 'The Flying Dutchman'!

What is your name, age, etc?

Edgar de Wit, 30 years young and a proud 'Brabander' (Brabant is a province in the Netherlands)

What do you do for a living?

In daily life, I am a certified welder, metalworker and design engineer.

Do you have a life motto?

'Everything can be repaired.'

What sports do you participate in?

Streetluge and longboard.

How long have you been doing these sports?

Since 1997.

How did you start with these sports? I mean, gravity sports are not a very common thing in The Netherlands

In the early 90's, I read about streetluge in Thrasher Magazine and saw it on television. Since then, it stayed on my mind. In 1997, I moved to Switzerland where I started going downhill sitting on a longboard. Soon after that, I started making my own streetluge, using pictures of Hot Heels I found in a magazine as an example / tutorial.

I was riding on some small hills when Marcus Locher, also known as Mr. Magun (maker of the Magun trucks) stopped his car and brought me for a few runs to the top of a new hill. He opened the trunk of his car and showed me his first longboards, which he was just starting to build at the time. The weekend after our meeting, we went to the Grimsel Pass: A 24.85 mile long downhill with 14% grade and 546,81 yards-long tunnels! We were stoked and I never looked back!

What other sports have you done before?

Mainly some skate and snowboarding.

When did you start racing in competitions?

Other than a small race in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1998, I started real competition at the Hot Heels in 1999. At that time, that was a little too much for me. A test run on a Sector 9 deck, wearing only a tee-shirt and a pair of jeans cost me the skin on my right arm. But I was an enthusiast spectator!

My first 'real race' was at the Hot Heels edition of 2000. I went there together with Mister Magun and Jurgen Uhlmann. I entered as a Swiss. It was just awesome! The racetrack was extreme, with a very steep start and tight

corners. Especially gnarly for a beginner! Don't forget the so-called, notorious "Hells Gate"! It's a blind corner where you don't need to brake. But, when you enter the Hells Gate with 100 km/hr of speed, everything in your body is screaming to brake down! I had my first heat against Darren Lott and Laurent Sahli. Against these world class lugers, I had no chance, But man, did I have fun!

You were one of the first streetlugers (in Europe). Wasn't it quite dangerous to invent the wheel, so to speak?

I was certainly not one of the pioneers of streetluge. In the USA, they have been riding streetluge since the 70's. In Europe, we were more focused on classic style (buttboarding) with not that many streetlugers in 1997. Yes, I started myself and this area with streetluge, but I certainly did not invent this wheel! I did "invent" my first luge, which is still a very competitive design without any good design template.

Roger Hickey and IGSA president Marcus Rietema (also a by origin a Dutch man!) are two of the true Godfathers of streetluge! Respect to them! Even though streetluge has existed since the 70's, the name of this sport is not that old. They found that name after the first editions of the X-Games, when they felt the need for a more easily marketed name than "laydown downhill skateboarding";.

The preeminent Euro streetlugers are, without a doubt, Stefan Wagner, Oli Totschnig, the Ssspring team from the UK, & Jimmy Pouzet from Switzerland. There are many others whom I can not recall right now. Don't forget the first generation at the Hot Heels events! I must admit, I am a bit proud that I've always been the only Dutchman at competitions.

The Netherlands is completely flat! Where are you lugging?

The Netherlands is indeed, almost completely flat. To get to the closest "proper downhill runs" means at least a 150 mile drive. Here, we've got some open roads to have some downhill fun on. Racing on open roads (I call this training, but it is more of a free ride) is the extreme part of streetluge for me. In the summer, I go every weekend to Germany to ride and race on open roads. Mostly, I ride in the "seven hill area" nearby the city Bonn, the Eifel area or the Moezel Valley. As a Dutch, it's very expensive to perform gravity sports: there are simply no proper downhill spots available in the Netherlands (except in the southern province of Limburg). I have to give up a lot of things for my streetluge passion.

Don't people think it is odd when they hear a Dutch is doing streetluge?

Colleague lugers often do think it is funny when they hear I am Dutch and doing a gravity sport. They stop laughing though, when I leave them behind me in a race! My friends and work colleagues in the Netherlands don't know better. They see me 24 hours being busy with streetluge and going fast. Mostly, they think it is cool but also weird. I don't know how it is in other countries, but here you are expected to have a house, a dog and a big wide plasma TV when you're at the age of 30. I don't care about these things. For me, there are other things more important. One of these is streetluge.

You are number 4 on the IGSA list. How do you do this?!

I am not that fast at all... Mainly, it's been lots of luck and trying to race as much as possible. At almost every race I ended in the top 10. I also had the luck that a lot of world class racers were not attending the races I did well at. I can't say that this counts for everyone. But during all the races, I collected a lot of points which resulted in my ranking position. 2005 was a good season: I had a lot of fun!

Which athletes inspire you the most?

A lot of people in the downhill scene have inspired me. To name a few: Peter Love, Tommy Haas, Stefan Wagner, Jimmy Pouzet, Mister Magun, Tom Mason, etc... Just because they are relaxed guys with the right intentions and cool attitude. Always helpful to others, friendly and sincere with the sport. Plus, for me they are Icons of Downhill.

What is your most memorable race?

Any race with Rene Marx, because we have "fun fights": I am way faster than he is but, somehow, he always manages to cross the finish line before me with some sneaky secret tactic! It is difficult, but I think my most memorable race is the one where I had a high-speed crash with Benny Weber in Dalby Forrest, UK. We were racing for the 3rd and 4th place when I wanted to catch up with him in the last right hander. I got knocked out, unconscious. Result: a serious concussion of my brain and a very sore neck! Same thing happened at the 2004 Almbtrieb carousel, in a race with Robert Lammlein. There I made a so-called "highsider" with luge and all...

Against whom do you really want to race once? Or is there anyone you never want to race with again?

I would love to be in a "6 heat run" with Marcus Rieteman, Tom Mason, Biker Sherlock, Roger Hickey and Bob Peyrera. (Just kidding). I race for the fun of it, so I love to race with everyone who gives each other their space and a fair play. I don't like to race with people who are too serious about the whole deal, aggressive people or people whom are looking down on other just because they had an eventual good race. I don't like them. Ride for the fun of it, with respect and joy!

Are there racers you are looking up to?

Like I said and mentioned: all the people having fun, making the races such a fun place to be at. Off course everyone wants to ride good, but not at the cost of all. Actually I am not looking to athletes. Respect is a better word. I have respect for everyone who respects me. Regarding streetluge, I have extra respect for athletes like Leander Lacey, David Dean, Peter Elliot and Gauthier Dekyndt. They are outer space with their technique and concentration!

What gives you your drive and power in life?

My "power", well, that's me, myself. I am who I am and I'm happy with the end result. Second, my girlfriend: her support and love, for me and everything I do. She stands behind me.

What is your life philosophy?

"I don't regret, never look backwards, sometimes look forwards, enjoy being yourself you won't be anybody else. And, go fast.

Other hobbies?

Travelling, My 1970, air-cooled Volkswagen bus, reading, filming, blacksmithing, making all kinds of metal constructions like motor frames, art and streetluges.

What is your racing gear?

My Citroën car (transportation and sleeping). Streetluge; self-made from aluminium. 3x Randal luge trucks, Bell Wedge helmet, Leathers, Vans, ceramic bearings (don't know which brand) and the wheels (Abec 11 flywheels mostly. Different sizes and duro's).

What is your favourite music?

From Bob Marley to Afro Celt Sound System to The Exploited. Till 10 years ago, strictly punk but now everything is possible!

Do you have any sponsors?

Yes I do. Here they come: Go Fast energy drinks, ENCO construction BV, Damen Leathers, & Verhoeven machine factory. Right now me and my team are working with Damen Leathers on designing the first exclusively made and designed leather racing suits for streetluge and stand-up. Aerodynamics, protection and durability. Current racing leathers are mostly regular motorcycle suits. Our racing suits will be designed and made according the CE / DOT rules and regulations. The same standards are used by the Dutch / NATO police.

So, you have a downhill team?

Well, until now, I was a team with myself. We will start this year the "De Wit Racing Team", representing gravity sports athletes. The team members, along with me are: Ayatollah Musa and Bart Linthorst.

What are the racing disciplines of your team members?

Aya is doing stand-up (crashing, ha ha!) and will start this year with streetluge. Bart is stoked on his gravity bike!

What is the most extreme moment you ever had?

Two of my most scary / extreme moments I had are: I was riding about 50mph when I hit a front coming Mercedes 190 with my shoulder! Since then, I am staying in my own lane! Another scary moment happened in Australia, when I had a roll-over driving my Toyota Landcruiser in a wild, mud stream.

What are your future plans?

I would love to have my own workshop, making custom products in my field of interest. I will keep on lugging as long as I

can. Maybe not always in a competition. Further there are some travelling destinations I want to go to.

What do you think, is streetluge going to be a "sport for the masses" or not?

I don't think that will ever happen. First of all, streetluge is not a cheap sport to get into. You need a luge, which is pretty expensive. Don't forget the leathers, wheels, etc... There are some risks involved as long as there are no closed roads to train. Until some of that changes, I don't think it will become a very attractive sport for the majority of people to do. Actually, I think streetluge has become a smaller sport, compared with stand-up downhill which is growing every year!

Speed or safety?

For me: Speed! I go for speed because I feel safe when I am on my luge. Traffic or not, I never feel insecure. Races are safe anyway. I don't mean to say safety is not important: Always wear your leathers and a proper helmet and gloves. But I want to go fast!

What do you advise people when they want to start with streetluge?

Always buy a good helmet, leathers and gloves! For the rest, get a true, straight luge, start slowly and slowly build up your speed. Until you have COMPLETE control over your luge, avoid roads with lots of traffic! It doesn't matter how you ride, racing or just recreative: Always wear leathers, helmet and gloves!

How is this year, 2006, going to be? Number1?

I don't think so. I am riding a lot this year. I will be happy when I end up in the top 10. Fun is everything with streetluge!

Anything else?

2006 seems like it will become a crazy year, with all the events coming up! Hey, we will even have a European Championship over here in The Netherlands! My good friend Ayatollah Musa made this possible. I think he is a driving force for the Dutch longboard / DH scene. Till now, unfortunately, he has not been getting the respect he deserves for the stuff he is trying to pull off. Hopefully, that will change after this year!

Edgar de Wit's favourite links:

www.gravity-sports.com

www.longboarden.com

www.michael-knappmann.de/vw_bus_d/reparat0.htm

To download a short movie of Edgar de Wit, go here: streetluge.wmv

To read the original text of this interview in Dutch: [click here!](#)

Special thanks to Aya Musa!! --The team at Silverfish Longboarding.com