

## Interview with Grégoire Pennes

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21-year old **Grégoire Pennes** will compete at his first World Championships in Eindhoven in two weeks. Pennes will also compete in the synchronized competition where he will be associated with long-time synchro partner **Sébastien Martiny**. Both Martiny and Pennes come from the Bois Colombes club where they were developed and coached by **Christine Blaise**. Pennes joined the national training center in Antibes approximately two years ago where he is now coached by **Franck Bardy**. Back in November 2004, he suffered a very serious injury on both his knees.

Grégoire Pennes took a bronze medal at the 2000 European junior Championships in synchronized trampoline, paired with Sébastien Martiny. He also won the gold medal at the 1998 WAG Games in the 13-14 category in individual. He won gold medals in synchro at the 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2003 WAG Games.

First, Acrobatic Sports would like to thank Grégoire Pennes for granting us this interview and taking the time to answer our questions.

**Acrobatic Sports** : Grégoire, could you analyze your comeback to the French team just few months after a very serious injury? Could you tell us more on this accident, your recovery, and the resumption of your training?

**Grégoire Pennes** : My accident goes back to last November. It was a great deal of hardship. First, I thought I would never resume trampolining: I was on a wheelchair, unable to simply stand up. I had serious doubts about continuing my career. The second step was after the operation. My surgeon told me right away that there was a chance to come back to my original level more or less quickly, and he suggested a 6-week stay at the CERS reeducation center of Cap Breton. It was a turning point. I was there only with injured athletes, all facing the same task, all together in order to leave in good shape. This stay went very well. I was able to walk again very early, with two splints though, but more and more confidently. We scheduled resuming training in June.

I came back to the CERS with **David Martin** to do some muscular reinforcement to prepare the training resumption that was so much awaited. Then, in Bois Colombes, I did my first jumps in 8 months...

It actually lasted only one week due to some back aches, but my knees were more solid than ever. My true resumption of training was in Rennes in July with the French team. It was a very difficult resumption but I saw myself improving every day. After this camp, I came back to Antibes and resumed the practices at the training facility of the French team. **Franck Bardy** then told me about the trials for the World Championships but clearly specified that I should not jump with that as a goal, that I should just practice and then see the level I would

have reached on the date of the trials. This is what I did, and the trials came without me focusing on them.

As a side note, I would like to thank all the persons who supported me during this time of hardship, and there were many. I felt really touched because, even when everything seems to go well, there are always difficult times where you feel alone. You then realize to which extent friends and close relatives are important.

**Acrobatic Sports** : What did you feel when the composition of the French team for the World Championships was officially announced? At what point of your recovery did you start thinking that you could win a spot on the team?

*Grégoire Pennes* : I felt a huge satisfaction. I really felt happy, proud of having come back after this accident. But as I said earlier, I thought about this selection but people like **Christine [Blaise]** and **Franck [Bardy]** made me understand that I should not resume training too quickly which could have been detrimental to my knees. So, I stopped thinking about it. The trials came. My second routine was determined one week before I competed at the trials. One of the motivations first was to motivate the others who were only 4 for 4 spots on the team. I added some pressure by competing at the trials.

**Acrobatic Sports** : How did your close relatives react?



*Grégoire Pennes* : My close relatives, especially my parents, could not believe it. I did not tell them that the training resumption was so successful. So, when I called them to let them know that I was selected, I really felt some joy from them. They were always there in the difficult times of my recovery. They know what I went through.

**Acrobatic Sports** : How did you announce the news to **Christine Blaise**, who developed you in Bois-Colombes? Could you tell us more about the years where she coached you and **Sébastien Martiny**?

*Grégoire Pennes* : I was very happy for her. She is the one who developed us from the seat drop to our arrival at the training center of the French national team. The first years, she was not joking. It was strict and sharp. Then, we evolved, we grew up. Our relationships changed. Thus, she crossed over the status of simple coach for us. I think that she really proved with us what she was capable of, and she still does it with the younger athletes.

**Acrobatic Sports** : What was your reaction to **Sébastien Martiny**'s selection?

*Grégoire Pennes* : During my recovery, I was staying in the loop of the evolution of the trainings in Antibes. Then, I saw him at the French Cup. To me, there was no doubt he would end up in the top 4. I was very happy for him. He deserves it. He worked really hard this year. His style evolved, and I feel that he is ready to compete in major competitions both physically and psychologically (provided he arrives on time... ;-).

**Acrobatic Sports** : Were you able to find your sensations back in synchronized trampoline?

*Grégoire Pennes* : Slowly, yes. And to know that France already has a very good synchro pair motivates us to be the most performing possible.

**Acrobatic Sports** : What were the issues you had to face after your injury (flexion issues,

pain during training, etc.) ?

**Grégoire Pennes** : The only real issue was with the flexion. I still do not possess a full flexion either on the left or the right knee. I continue to be treated by a kinesiologist in order to fully regain the flexion in my both knees. It is the only real setback I have now.

**Acrobatic Sports** : What will be your approach of the World Championships in two weeks? How will your preparation go on? Will it be different than the others' preparation due to having resumed jumping recently? What will be your objectives in individual, synchronized, and team competitions?

**Grégoire Pennes** : To me, the recovery stage is over. Physically, I am able to follow a compete practice again. Thus, I see my preparation like a regular preparation. I forgot about my knees. I cannot complain. I tell to myself that I never stopped jumping in order to focus only on my performance on the trampoline. As to the Worlds, I think my approach is pretty relaxed. It is a reward to me after my accident. I will really focus on the team and synchro competitions. I will be the first one to jump. My role will be to make the 3 others confident, and I count on filling my role to the best I can. As to the synchro, we are fairly inexperienced but a final would be a great thing, and to that effect, we will have to perform better than **Sébastien [Laifa]** and **Mickey [Jala]**...

**Acrobatic Sports** : Who do you see winning the World Champion titles in individual trampoline, synchronized trampoline, and tumbling?

**Grégoire Pennes** : I am not too good with numbers. In addition, you know that these sports are always full of surprises. Therefore, I will not name any names.

**Acrobatic Sports** : Academically, what will you do this year? What are your professional objectives?

**Grégoire Pennes** : I will study in first year of BTS [NB: two-year degree post high school] in corporate communication. I was not able to complete this first year of BTS last year as my mind was not really set on that.

**Acrobatic Sports** : Grégoire, thank you for taking the time to answer our questions. Good luck for Eindhoven

His profile: [http://www.ffgym.com/tr/cv\\_pennes.htm](http://www.ffgym.com/tr/cv_pennes.htm)