



Putting fun into veganism!

It all began quite innocently enough. Some 50 odd vegans from all corners of the globe had arrived to participate in the harmonious and reasonable exchange of ideas, at the 10th International Vegan Festival, in Denmark in 2006. We'd all been forging international friendships, respecting cultural differences, and exuding sensible reasonableness from every pore, when Stefano from Italy finally cracked.

Text and photos: Andrew Knight

It was at least 50 feet from the top of the Rabjerg Mile — the world's largest sand dune — to its ever-shifting base. During our day hike we'd learnt interesting facts about how far this dune had moved since 1960. We'd learnt of

its propensity to swallow forests and small villages in its path. We'd even had a botanical lecture about an unusual type of ground shrub at its base. We were strung out along the top of the dune, politely admiring the awesome view after an earnest day of learning, when Stefano suddenly threw himself off the edge.

Stephane from France briefly considered his rapidly receding downward trajectory, and followed shortly thereafter. Knowing there was no-one else to represent Australia, it was clear that I had little choice. I closed my eyes and threw myself after them. And thus was born the World's first Vegan Dune-Tumbling Championships!

Our repeated descents were duly filmed and studied later that evening on the big screen, by the rest of the festival participants, who then voted on our performances. Prizes ranged from a massage

This is the culprit, alias Stefano Mazzarano of Italy, who suddenly and without warning, decided to leap off the top of the Rabjerg Mile.





Vegan dune tumbling lessons: 1. Find a really big sand dune. 2. Launch yourself from the top...



by the lovely lady from Finland — which I secretly hoped to win, to a public duet with our brilliant and famous pianist Linda Gentile — that all were terrified of winning.

After careful study, however, the audience awarded gold to Italy, impressed by Stefano's finely-fluttering feet during his descent. The Italian's have ever been masters of style, after all. As I watched him being led away for his massage, I reflected that at least I'd not won the duet, which was awarded to France — although Stephane acquitted himself well, despite his nerves. Instead

I won **bronze** for Australia, for which I received precisely nothing.

At least our efforts apparently managed to inspire. In the coming days an ever-increasing number of vegans of all shapes and sizes launched themselves from an impressively-sized dune at a nearby beach. Soon we had women's tumbling, men's doubles, and even formation tumbling. Although Stephane's efforts to generate extra lift with an enormous beach towel ended ignominiously, it was nevertheless from these humble beginnings that the Extreme Vegan

Formation tumbling. Requires careful coordination.



Mens doubles.





The womens event.

Sporting Association was born!

The Extreme Vegan Sporting Association

The EVSA was created partly to address the misperception in certain quarters that vegans cannot be fit and strong. Our website showcases outstanding vegan athletes from around the world, including top body builders, martial artists and ultra-endurance athletes, and provides a summary of the nutritional benefits of the vegan diet, such as higher antioxidant status, which may, for example, speed exercise recovery.

Additionally, we seek to demonstrate that the vegan lifestyle is not some kind of grim and joyous existence, overshadowed by self-denial. Instead, we seek to demonstrate by example that being vegan can be fun. A hell of a lot of fun, in fact.

Unfortunately, however, this has not been straightforward, because some of us have a rather warped sense of fun. To date EVSA events have included the Vegan 3 Peaks Challenge 2009 — in which we climbed the three highest mountains in

Artificial aids may be used for increased lift...



The French connection.

Wales, England and Scotland in the same day; and our recent Vegan 15 Peaks Challenge — in which we climbed all 15 Welsh peaks above 3,000 feet in a single day.

Fortunately, some of us have proven more sensible — at least sometimes. To publicise the vegan diet, Vegan 3 and 15 Peaks participant Andrew Taylor jumped out of an aircraft dressed in a banana costume and parachute, in 2009, and in 2008 Julie Rosenfield and Sarah-Jane completed London's Great Gorilla Run in full costume, after a training regime of vegan cake and chocolate. Oddly, despite months of dedicated training they finished last out of 750 gorillas! At least there were bananas at the finish, although sadly not chocolate-flavoured.

After a bit of a scare climbing Mt Blanc in the Alps last year, due to an unfortunate fitness/ambition imbalance, I'm seeking more sensible ways to demonstrate just how much fun veganism can be. On narrowly surviving I solemnly promised that my next extreme vegan challenge would be warm, comfortable, and very

...but have not yet proven successful.



close to sea level. Shark-diving is clearly the obvious choice. I'm now seeking an ecologically-friendly shark diving tour operator, somewhere nice and warm, partly because I'd quite like to see these magnificent creatures before they become virtually extinct.

Other adventurous vegans are also welcome to send pictures of their exploits for consideration for our website. All who subscribe to our fun and life-affirming sporting ideals may consider themselves members of the EVSA. All sports are considered, but you've got to be vegan. Together, we can put the fun back into veganism!

Andrew Knight is the founder of the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association. For more information, visit: www.extremevegansports.org



Team vegan.