

# KarateNow

Notizie, interviste, gare e risultati del Karate Olimpico

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Interview with one of the protagonists of the Karate world stage

## Salim Bendiab the champion of France of Sicilian origin



INTERVIEW  
by Rossella Zoccali

Salim Bendiab, Champion of France, Champion of Europe and the World with the French National Team, protagonist of the international stage since 2013, when, at the age of 23, he won two gold medals, one at the "Premier League" "in Paris and the other at the" Premier League "in Salzburg. Unfortunately, his career has been hampered by injuries that have precluded him from qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics. Salim is a complete athlete, he has mastered all techniques, knockdowns are his specialties.

### THE INTERVIEW

**R:** How old did you start practicing karate and who was your first teacher?

**S:** I started practicing Karate at the age of 8 and my first teacher was Fabrice Bououill.

**R:** When I met you in Santiago de Chile, on the occasion of the "Serie A", you told me that you had Italian origins.

**S:** Italian blood also flows through my veins. My father is Algerian and my Italian Algerian mother. My grandmother is called Angelina. I am Mediterranean. I have not yet met my family in Italy, but I am proud of my origins and I would like to go to the Italian country of my grandmother, which is located in Sicily. At the first opportunity I will go there.

**R:** What was the first race you won? Do you

want to list the most important results of your competitive career, also considering the French national championships?

**S:** The first competition I won was held in my city of Valenciennes. In the morning I lost the Kata race and in the afternoon I won the kumite final by 8 to 0. My first important result, however, was first place in the French championship in 2005. Then I was several times French champion, 8 times winner of the French Cup, European youth champion 2011; 2012 world team champion, 2013 European team champion; 3rd at the 2016 European Championships; winner or on the podium in numerous WKF "Karate 1" races.

**R:** Have you practiced any other sport besides karate?

**S:** In addition to Karate I have practiced football, boxing and breakdancing.

**R:** Have you ever thought about leaving karate?

**S:** Yes, sometimes I thought about it, in particular, when I suffered a hip injury that kept me still for a long time. But karate is a passion, it's my drug... I love competition.

**R:** What is the race you remember with greatest emotion?

**S:** It was the world

championships in Paris in 2012 when we won against Turkey. We prepared for two years and it was difficult to win. I was only 22 years old and the home crowd supported us a lot, it was beautiful. The emotion is indescribable. We have made many sacrifices in our lives to win.

**R:** Do you think the Olympic qualification rules are correct, or should they be reviewed?

**S:** I find the qualifying rules are not good because there are too many "Premier League" and "Serie A" competitions. I also think that the weight categories for the Olympic Games should be those foreseen in the "Karate 1" competitions.

**R:** What chance do you think you have for Tokyo?

**S:** I don't think I qualify until the end of the circuit because I am late because of my injuries, so I am aiming for the qualifying tournament for Paris.

**R:** What do you think of the fact that the WKF has repropounded the races it had canceled?

**S:** I think it's good for me because I just got back from a knee injury and it gives me time to recover as much as possible and get back stronger than ever.

**R:** Karate was not in-



Knockdown of Salim Bendiab

cluded in the 2024 Olympics in France, in your country, what do you think of this exclusion?

**S:** I think that French karate (the federation) should have done more communication on karate in 2024. I am sad because karate is a beautiful sport and deserves to be at the Olympic Games and even more because it takes place in France, also because the France is one of the strongest nations.

I think French karate would have had many victories, I think.

**R:** Considering that you have been on tatami mats all over the world for many years, do you think you can make a prediction on the champions of your category who have already obtained the Olympic pass?

**S:** First of all I would like

to get back in shape in the 2021 season to qualify and win the Olympics, but the way to go is very difficult. However, I think Sajad, the Iranian, can win or Aktas, the Turkish. Horne, the German, will be able to go on the podium. Do not underestimate the Croatian Kvesic.

**R:** How are you doing your workouts during this "coronavirus" period?

**S:** I train a lot and hard to improve. I do a lot of physical preparation, I prepare my body to be strong for the next season. My day off is Sunday and I see the Italian physiotherapist for recovery. I practice other combat sports to open my mind.

The KarateNow editorial team thanks Salim Bendiab for his availability and wishes him the best of luck.



Salim Bendiab at the age of 8