

"I started thinking about what would be the highest that someone could jump from when I was 16," says Baumgartner, stepping out of his capsule. "But I never thought I'd be the one to do it."

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EXCLUSIVE

FELIX BAUMGARTNER

# THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

Felix Baumgartner breaks the speed of sound—  
without an aircraft **BY JOHNNY DODD**



Safely back on solid ground, Baumgartner celebrates after his successful jump shattered three world records, including the highest skydive and the highest manned-balloon flight.



  
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FELIX'S  
24-MILE  
JUMP

**N**ot long before skydiver Felix Baumgartner jumped from a helium-filled balloon 24 miles above the Earth, he sat in an Italian restaurant in Los Angeles to discuss some of the things that keep him up at night. “Death can happen very quickly up there,” he said in between bites of pasta. “When I jump, there’s a chance I could begin spinning so quickly that all my blood will go to my brain, then exit through my eyeballs.”

Fortunately, the man known as “Fearless Felix” is fully intact after his 833.96-mph-plunge on Oct. 14 landed him in the record books as the first human to travel faster than the speed of sound without the use of a jet or a spacecraft. The former Austrian para-

trooper wore a pressurized suit to shield him from the minus 70-degree temperatures and the lack of oxygen that could have caused lethal bubbles to form in his blood.

“When I was standing there on top of the world,” Baumgartner said shortly after landing near Roswell, N.M., “you become so humble, you do not think about breaking records anymore. . . The only thing you want to do is come back alive.”

Baumgartner’s jump, bankrolled by the energy drink company Red Bull, also made him a global Internet sensation as millions tuned in via desktop and mobile phone to a live-feed of his death-defying descent. What’s next for the 43-year-old daredevil? “I’m retiring,” he says. “I want to find a nice, decent job as a helicopter pilot.” ●