

2 skydivers, 52 years apart, same lofty goal

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CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) -- The advice from master to student over the past three years has been simple: Be prepared. Know what to do and how to do it.

"Fearless Felix" Baumgartner heeded Joe Kittinger's advice and followed it.

In the desert surrounding Roswell, N.M., on Sunday, Baumgartner broke Kittinger's world record for the highest and fastest free fall.

Baumgartner jumped from 128,100 feet, or about 24 miles, for the highest skydive - more than four miles higher than Kittinger's jump in 1960, which was from 102,800 feet or 19.5 miles. He broke the sound barrier and more, achieving Mach 1.24.

A brief comparison of the two men and their endeavors:

Baumgartner is 43 and a former Austrian military parachutist with more than 2,500 jumps behind him.

Kittinger was 32 and a captain in the U.S. Air Force. He's now 84 and lives near Orlando, Fla. His record jump was his 33rd skydive.

Baumgartner accelerated to 833.9 mph to break the sound barrier, or Mach 1. He went beyond that, achieving Mach 1.24, according to preliminary data that must be confirmed with international aeronautic authorities. Kittinger was clocked at a maximum 614 mph, equivalent at that altitude to Mach 0.9.

Baumgartner ascended in a pressurized capsule hoisted by a 30 million-cubic-foot helium balloon, 335 feet tall when inflated. Kittinger rode an open, unpressurized gondola that was lifted by a 3 million-cubic-foot balloon, 184 feet tall when inflated.

Baumgartner wore a custom-made full-pressure suit. Kittinger wore an Air Force standard partial-pressure suit. He was initially claustrophobic in his suit and had counseling to overcome his anxiety.

"When you close your visor, it's your own little world. You don't hear anything from the outside anymore. The only thing that you hear is yourself breathing all the time. Then you start thinking about bad things and it's getting worse in a very short amount of time," Baumgartner said days before the jump. "Your brain sometimes does fancy things."

Kittinger, by contrast, was a test pilot and used to pressure suits. In 1972, his fighter jet was shot down and he ended up a Vietnam POW, surviving 11 months of

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torture at the "Hanoi Hilton" prison. In the next cell was Sen. John McCain.

Kittinger's Project Excelsior was Air Force. Baumgartner's Red Bull Stratos effort is sponsored by the energy drink maker.

Both men had two test jumps before the grand finale.

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