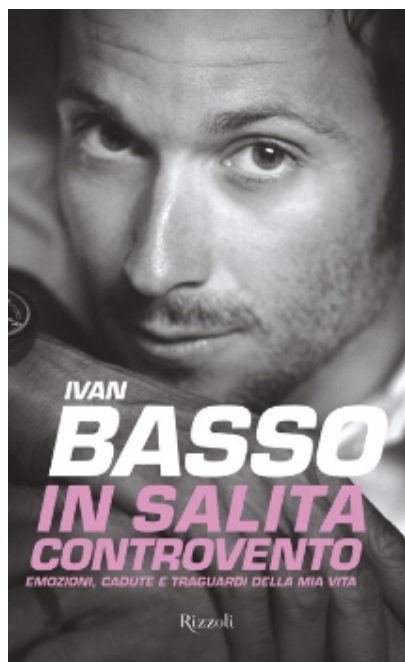


Ivan Basso, his autobiography in bookshops

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“Uphill, against the wind”: one of the most difficult situations for anyone that rides a bicycle (and this is true for both professional and amateur cyclists alike), is the title of one of the most important books written about the world of cycling in recent years. It is the **biography of Ivan Basso**, the champion from Varese, who has won the Giro d'Italia twice (2006 and 2010), and who is currently getting ready to leave for France, to achieve his dream “of a yellow jersey”. The book was written together with the Varese journalist, Francesco Caielli (who writes for the newspaper *La Provincia*), and it candidly follows the life and career of Ivan; there are pleasant accounts of his victories in sport and life, unpleasant accounts, that deal honestly with the “Operacion Puerto” and his subsequent disqualification because of attempted doping, and moving accounts, when the champion from Cassano speaks about his mother, Nives, who died from cancer in February 2005.

Each of the thirteen chapters of the book (published by Rizzoli) begins with a precise, significant place and day, from which the account of a part of Ivan Basso's life and career evolves. We interviewed Ivan about his publishing debut.

Ivan, is it more difficult to get ready for a long stage race, or to write a book about your life?

“I don't want to say it was difficult, all the work was done because I wanted to do it. Being able to write an autobiography, being able to tell people about a big part of my life is, in itself, something to be proud of, because it means that I've done something important. Of course, the book is the result of several months of hard work, spent selecting and putting to paper those sides of me that fans and enthusiasts won't find by surfing the Internet. Our initial idea was to tell people about who I am, how I took certain decisions, and what my approach to life

is. I didn't only want to remember the teams I've ridden with, or what I've won; I wasn't interested in writing an almanac."

The book has come out a year after your last race, the 2010 Giro d'Italia (photo by G. Cottini), and on the eve of a Tour de France, which is your next challenge. Why this choice of timing?



"It was an intentional choice; in fact, my decision not to race in the last Giro brought to a conclusion a period of my career. In the book, I explain the reasons for my absence from the Giro, and why I want to try to realise a great dream, to win the Tour. The book, this book, ends like that, but of course, I hope to write another one in the future ..."

The dedications at the beginning are to your three children. But looking through the pages of your biography, a number of passages, in which you speak about your mother, Nives, about Aldo Sassi, and about Franco Ballerini, stand out most and are most moving.

"Those pages are part of what I was saying before: recounting relationships with certain people, how I tackled particular times in my life, which people haven't been able to read about before. Newspaper articles aren't enough; you need the space of a book to deal with certain, also delicate, topics. My intention, and that of those who collaborated with me, was also to pay well-deserved tribute to a number of special people, like those you've mentioned. I think the tribute is one of the nicest things in the book."

Now, a few weeks since your publishing debut, is there a comment or a compliment that has given you particular pleasure?

"I've received quite a lot of complimentary messages, and of course, that's very nice. But, above all, I think that the people who produced this book have to like it; I think what is most important is the commitment we put in, the obsessive care over certain details which were included to get across what I wanted to say. The satisfaction that it's given us is what I consider to be most important."

Nowadays, there are a lot of sports biographies around. Did you draw inspiration from any particular predecessors to write yours?

"No. I tried to do it in my own way, also choosing the photo for the front cover (of another rider from Varese, Walter Capelli, *ed.*), the title and the decision about some important passages.

But of course, this isn't my job, so I relied on a number of people, who contributed and took care of several aspects of the book. These are the people I thank at the end of the book, who were close to me during this adventure ... away from the pedals."

In salita controvento – Emozioni, cadute e traguardi della mia vita

(Uphill, against the wind – The emotions, falls and finishing lines of my life)

Ivan Basso, with Francesco Caielli, Forewords by Pier Bergonzi and Pier Augusto Stagi

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