
Association Announcement

2005 Andrei Borisovich Vistelius Research Award



Sebastien Strebelle

I cannot presently think of a more deserving person than Sebastien Strebelle for the much coveted Vistelius Prize bestowed each year by IAMG to the young scientist with the greatest achievement and greatest potential for future breakthroughs in his/her discipline.

Sebastien had already achieved a past and secured a future, this at an indecent young age before he turned 30! One wonders how one can keep up with that kind of a record!

Listen! He started by being accepted in the foremost Applied Mathematics and Engineering School, the French Ecole Polytechnique, a concentrate of what MIT, CalTech and Harvard could offer in hard sciences, then graduated among the top decile and thus was admitted into one of the elite French “Corps,” institutions

which traditionally grow all high level officials whether industry CEOs or cabinet members including the nation presidents; think about Yale Law School with a Rhodes scholarship. At that point, back in 1996, he had his career traced in the French upper highway. But this was a traditional way, probably too easy for a very young man. He met a forceful and a very pretty lady, Audrey, who was not prepared for the couple to settle for common roads.

They moved to another continent, America and Quebec City, because everything was new there and the winter beautiful. Sebastien had to start again without the prestige of Ecole Polytechnique, he completed within a year a MS in Environmental Sciences with the National Institute of Scientific Research and was offered a top position, but then Audrey thought that the Quebec winter beyond all its white was a bit too harsh.

Their road went south to California and the Silicon Valley, where it is said the ultimate challenges are held and the weather superb. Schools rolled out red carpets to attract him and Stanford beat Berkeley, perhaps because one program there was directed by yet another French migrant and crazy. Sebastien found again that drive to be the absolute best, completed his PhD within 3 years, and changed for ever geostatistics, a discipline he has never heard of prior to landing in SFO. In this course, he put to antique most of what his advisor knew or did in geostatistics in the last 30 years, married Audrey, and put her to school (PhD at Stanford) perhaps to get some rest. Sebastien is now with Chevron Texaco having established his multiple-point geostatistics technology as the corporate standard by which all its reservoir models are built worldwide.

Sebastien, I feel honored to deliver this laudation today. Although you did wipe out as no more relevant most of what I have been fine tuning and teaching for years, you did graduate from Stanford University and you are carrying high and proud our flag. Most importantly, you are continuing that irreverent way of the early geostatistics, one that respect no tradition, trusting one's own ingenuity with full confidence in one's theoretical background and ability to put things to work, not only publish. The future of geostatistics, your geostatistics not mine anymore, is in great hands . . . in as much as gorgeous Audrey would allow it.

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