

#2
2019/20

ROUTE SETTER

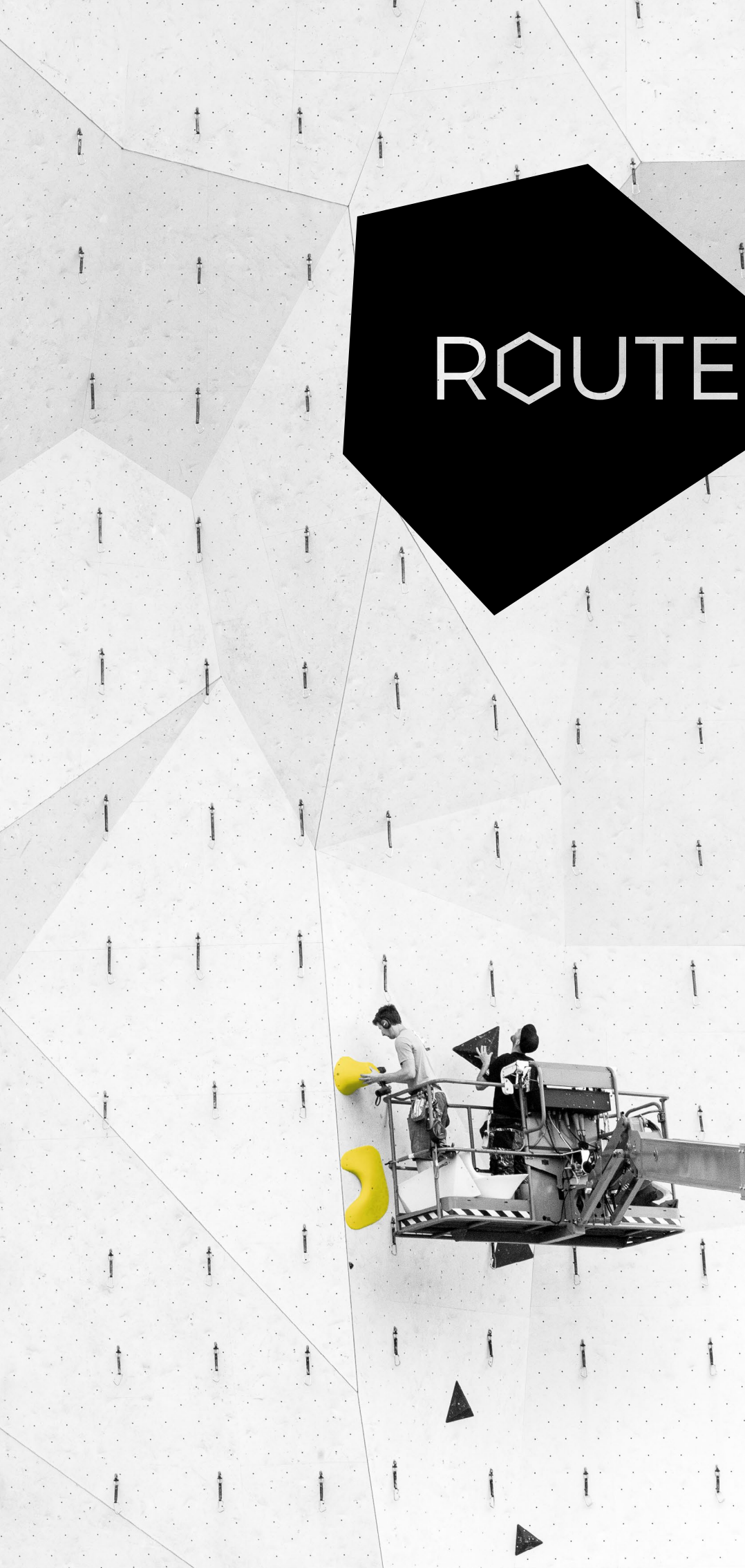
a magazine for route setters
and climbing gyms

GYM CONCEPTS 2.0
philosophy and vision

CLIMBING HOLDS
evolution, material, trends

**ROUTE SETTERS
INTERNATIONAL**
a global survey

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“WHAT CLIMBERS REALLY NEED? THEY SEARCH FOR THE ESSENTIAL.”

Pietro Dal Pra



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Route Finding

No matter what your role is in climbing – connoisseur, gym owner, route setter, manufacturer or other – if you're sitting here reading this, chances are you probably don't need us to school you on climbing's rapid-fire growth. What started as a noticeable and steady drip post global recession is now a high pressure hose that we're all trying to keep up with and drink from. If you've been climbing for more than five years, wherever you interact with climbing – your gym, your local crags and favorite destinations – you've likely been seeing this growth play out and reach a higher crescendo with each passing year.

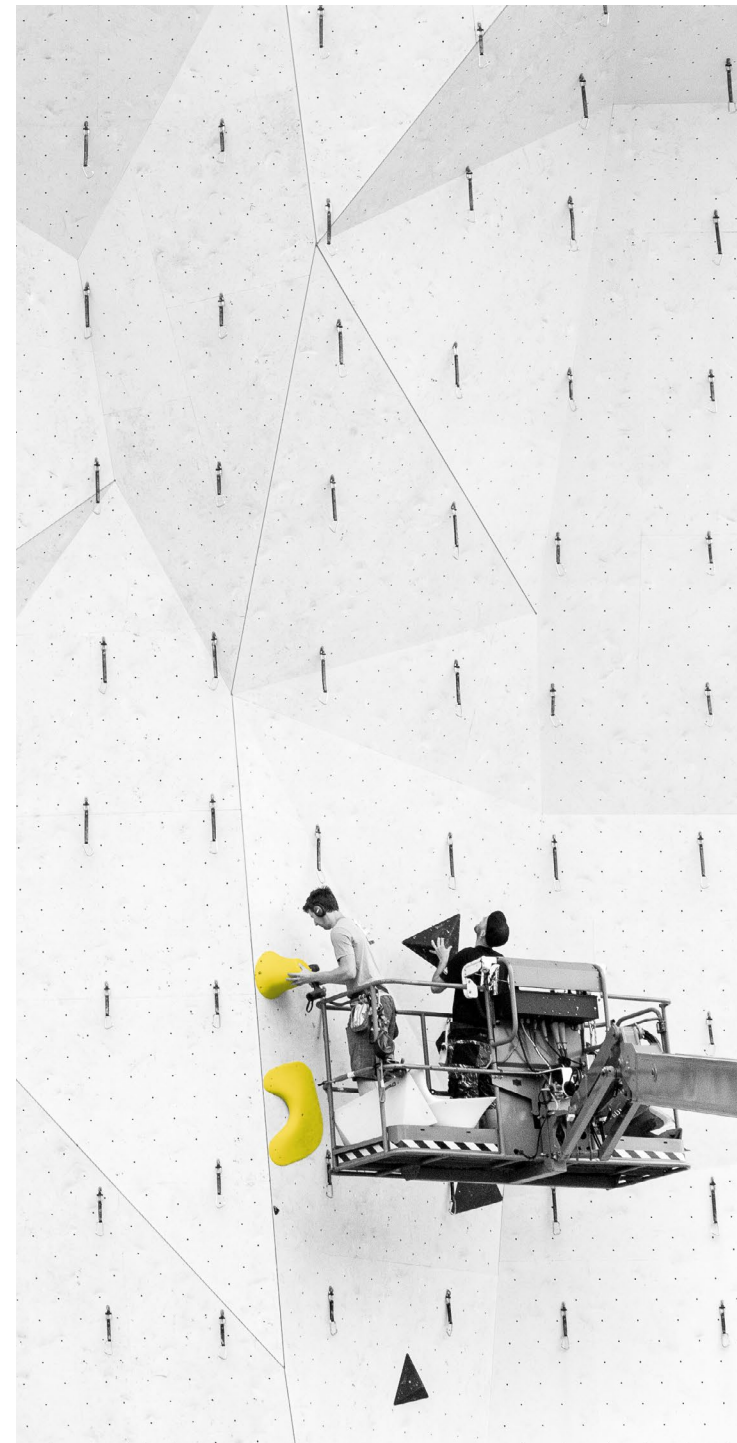
In the face of such growth, change is inevitable, and all facets of climbing stand to win and lose. The outcome depends entirely on us as the protagonists, providers and ambassadors being able to unite and rise to the occasion, insuring a path (or route) for the up-and-coming to follow, while at the same time not losing sight of the bigger picture.

If we look at this challenge of balancing and furthering climbing's accessibility with sustainability in the same way we would look at a route we're trying to redpoint, it becomes easier to see that we have the ability; we can do the moves, it's just a matter of linking sections: The local best interests with the global best interests, the indoor with the outdoor, the seasoned pro or setter with the enthusiastic second-timer. The more active measures that we take to sustainably build and connect these sections, the better off our sport, industry, and spaces we climb will be.

In this issue, Route Setter #2, we seek to pick up where we left off with the inaugural first issue. With the help, beta, and insight from some of the industry's movers and shakers, we take a look at these challenging topics, as well as the latest technology and trends, and what it all means. As always, your feedback is welcome and we appreciate your continued support. You can also stay connected by joining our Facebook group *Route Setter Magazine*.

Climbing always,

THE VERTICAL-LIFE TEAM



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The Route Setter Magazine is published once a year (November) by Vertical-Life s.r.l., available in print and in digital format worldwide. The magazine is devoted to gym climbing and its connected businesses.
Contact & orders: sales@vertical-life.info

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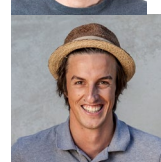
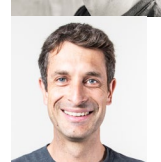
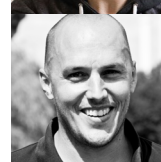
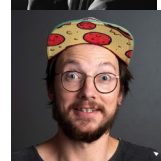
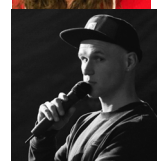
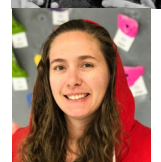
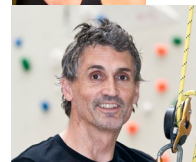
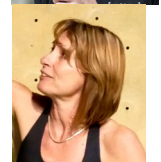
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black to the future.



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TERRES NEUVES

A LOOK AT THE OLD AND NEW WORLDS OF THE CLIMBING GYM SCENE
CLIMBING GYM CONCEPTS 2.0

EIN BLICK IN DIE ALTE UND NEUE WELT DER KLETTERHALLENLANDSCHAFT
KLETTERHALLEN KONZEPTE 2.0

TEXT: CHRISTIAN POPIEN

◆ *A special magazine dedicated to all aspects of route setting and climbing gym management, trade shows, conferences and round-table discussions on indoor climbing, and an industry that is focusing increasingly on both this market and new target groups. In 2019, it is hard to imagine urban spaces without commercial climbing and bouldering gyms that are open to the public. Indoor climbing is now mainstream, and there is feverish anticipation surrounding 2020, when climbing will become an Olympic sport for the first time.*

Both among experts and in the press, there is much talk of rapid development in sport climbing, of successful, healthy growth without any stars or significant media attention. But how is the climbing gym scene really developing and what are the roots and foundations underpinning the countless varied bouldering and climbing gyms we are able to visit today?

When I climbed my first meters in 1989 at the age of eleven, it was in the staircase of a classic single-family home where I was visiting a new school friend. Colorful, rock-like shapes were screwed to the wall that just invited you to climb up them. Secured to the top rope, I climbed up my first five meters on an artificial climbing wall. These modest first attempts were to make a lasting impression on me, but several years and many hours climbing on rock would pass before I entered a real climbing gym for the first time. Development of such facilities was already well-advanced, but in the area around Cologne/Bonn (Bonn was still the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany at the time) there simply weren't any climbing gyms. The foundations, however, had long been in place.

The first artificial climbing walls were built back at the end of the 1930s. In the US city of Seattle, Schurman Rock, also known as Monitor Rock, was the first ever artificial climbing structure to be built, in 1938. It's appearance more closely resembled the wall of an old knight's castle than a climbing wall, however. As early as 1960, pupils of Ullswater School in the British town of Penrith had the pleasure of climbing on their very own wall, built with a top rope anchor in their gym. Later, the indoor climbing wall built by Don Robinson at the University of Leeds in 1964 garnered far greater attention.

So even back then, there was no lack of creativity or inventiveness in creating opportunities for artificial climbing, where the primary aim was to prepare oneself for heroic first ascents on rock or for other alpine adventures. Munich and Berlin, for example, gained their first concrete climbing facilities in the late 1960s. The Teufelsberg tower constructed from shotcrete in 1969 was, at the time, the only climbing option for West Berliners cut off by the wall, and it remains very popular within the climbing community today. In South Tyrol in 1974, enormously heavy boulders of dolomite rock were ferried from the Sella Pass to Bolzano on military trucks and used to build an indoor climbing gym.

Nonetheless, all these complexes and artificial climbing structures were still a very long way from the modern climbing gyms we know today. This was set to change in the early 1980s. Frenchman and founder of the company Entre-Prises, François Savigny, developed detachable climbing holds, initially from sandstone and a short while later from concrete resin. He equipped the first climbing walls with these in France starting in 1985.

◆ *Ein eigenes Magazin zu den Themen Routenbau und Kletterhallenmanagement, Fachmessen, Fachtagungen und Podiumsdiskussionen über das Indoorklettern und eine Industrie, die sich zunehmend auf diesen Markt und neue Zielgruppen fokussiert. Öffentlich zugängliche, kommerzielle Kletter- und Boulderhallen sind aus dem urbanem Raum im Jahre 2019 nicht mehr wegzudenken. Indoorklettern ist „Mainstream“ geworden und gespannt fiebern alle dem Jahr 2020 entgegen, wenn Klettern zum ersten Mal bei den Olympischen Spielen dabei sein wird.*

Unter Experten und in der Medienlandschaft ist von einer rasanten Entwicklung des Klettersports die Rede, von einem erfolgreichen und gesunden Wachstum ohne Stars und größere mediale Aufmerksamkeit. Aber wie steht es wirklich um die Entwicklung der Kletterhallenlandschaft und wo liegen die Wurzeln und Grundlagen der zahlreichen, vielseitigen Boulder- und Kletterhallen, wie wir sie heute besuchen können?

Als ich 1989 im jungen Alter von elf Jahren meine ersten Klettermeter machte, befand ich mich im Treppenhaus eines klassischen Einfamilienhauses und war zu Besuch bei meinem neuen Schulfreund. Bunte, steinähnliche Formen waren an die Wand geschraubt und hatten einen hohen Aufforderungscharakter an ihnen nach oben zu klettern. Gesichert im Toprope kletterte ich meine ersten fünf Meter an einer künstlichen Kletterwand empor. Diese bescheidenen ersten Versuche sollten mich nachhaltig prägen und doch vergingen noch ein paar Jahre und viel Zeit beim Klettern am Fels, bis ich zum ersten Mal eine richtige Kletterhalle betrat. Die Entwicklung war durchaus schon weit fortgeschritten, aber im Raum Köln/Bonn (Bonn war zu der Zeit noch Hauptstadt der Bundesrepublik Deutschland) gab es schlicht und ergreifend noch keine Kletterhalle. Dabei war der Grundstein doch schon längst gelegt.

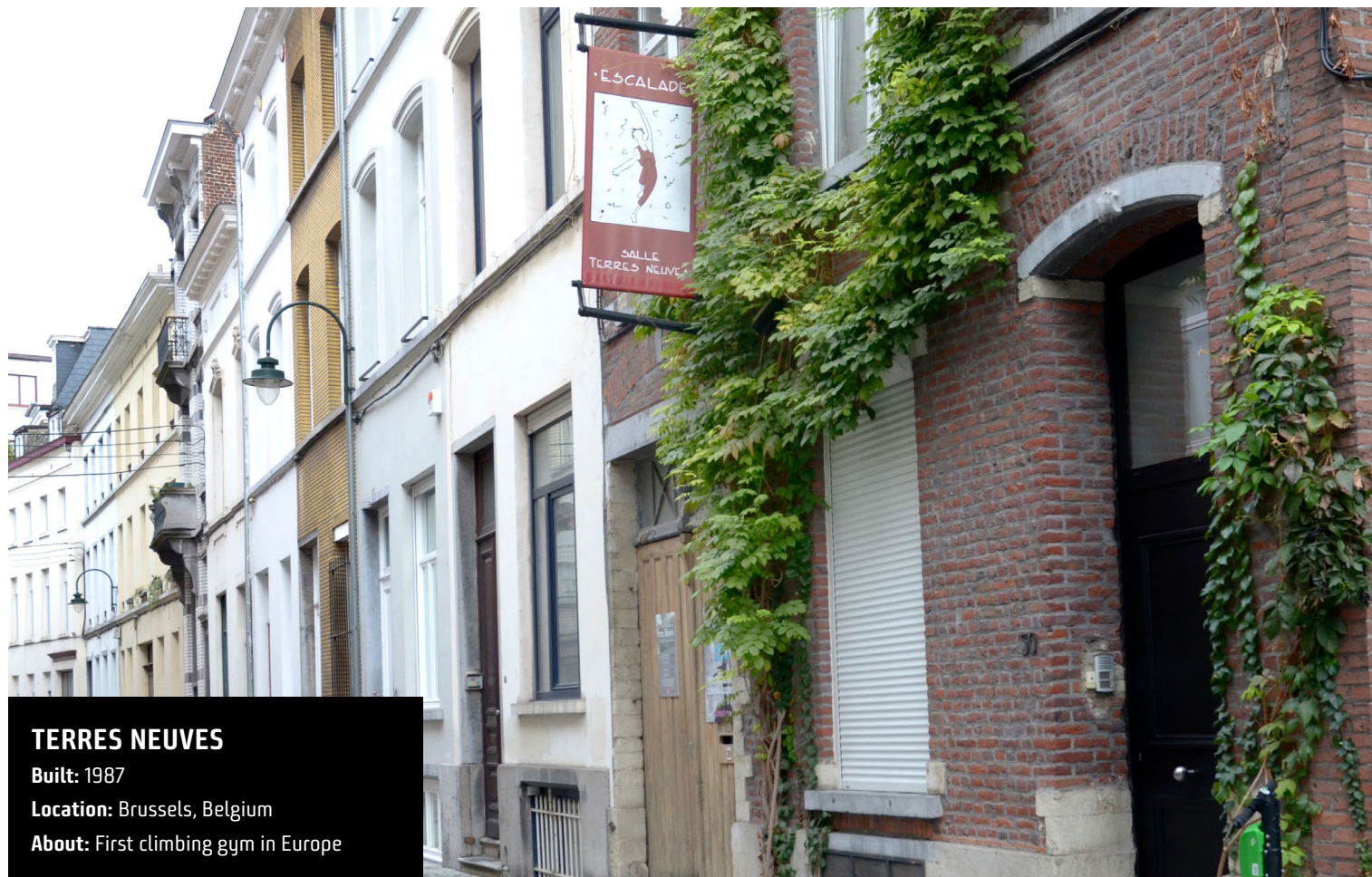
Die ersten künstlichen Kletterwände wurden schon Ende der 1930 Jahre gebaut. In Seattle in den USA wurde 1938 mit dem Schurman Rock, oder auch Monitor Rock genannt, eine erste künstliche Kletterstruktur geschaffen. Sie ähnelte dabei eher der Mauer einer alten Ritterburg als einer Kletterwand. Schon im Jahr 1960 kamen die Schüler der Ullswater School in Perith in England zu dem Vergnügen an einer eigens gebauten Kletterwand mit Toprope-Umlenker in ihrer Turnhalle zu klettern. Wesentlich bekannter wurde dann die von Don Robinson im Jahre 1964 gebaute Indoor-Kletterwand an der Universität Leeds.

Es mangelte also schon damals nicht an Kreativität und Ideenreichtum, künstliche Klettermöglichkeiten zu schaffen mit dem primären Ziel, sich für heldenhafte Erstbegehungen am Fels oder für sonstige alpinistische Abenteuer vorzubereiten. In München und Berlin wurden beispielsweise Ende der 60er Jahre erste Kletteranlagen aus Beton gebaut. Der 1969 in Berlin gebaute Teufelsberg aus Spritz-

beton stellte damals die einzige Klettermöglichkeit für die durch die Mauer abgeschnittenen Westberliner dar und gilt noch heute als ein beliebter Spot für die Klettercommunity. In Südtirol wurden im Jahr 1974 tonnenschwere Felsbrocken aus Dolomitgestein mit Militärtrucks vom Sellajoch bis nach Bozen gebracht und zu einer Indoor-Kletteranlage verbaut.

“THE YEAR 1987 MUST SURELY GO DOWN AS A PIVOTAL AND GROUNDBREAKING MOMENT.”

„DAS JAHR 1987 KANN SICHER ALS ENTSCHEIDEND UND RICHTUNGSWEISEND BEZEICHNET WERDEN.“



TERRES NEUVES

Built: 1987

Location: Brussels, Belgium

About: First climbing gym in Europe

The year 1987 must surely go down as a pivotal and groundbreaking moment. This was when the first public climbing gyms most closely resembling modern designs were opened in Seattle, USA, and in the Belgian city of Brussels. Thanks to their construction from coated multiplex boards with detachable, synthetic resin climbing holds, Seattle's **Vertical World**, which until 1994 was known as Vertical Club, and **Terres Neuves**, opened by Marc Bott and Isabelle Dorsimond in Brussels, can be regarded not only as trendsetting, but also as the pioneers of today's climbing gym scene.

The origins of Europe's climbing gym culture therefore lie in the European city of Brussels, just a few hours' drive from my home region of Cologne/Bonn. In a narrow, cobbled street in the heart of the trendy Stalingrad neighborhood, Marc and Isabelle's team chose a former canning factory for the site of the first ever climbing gym to be opened to the public. It was a new world for climbers, and new business territory for the two founders besides. There could have been no place more suitable than this old industrial building on Rue Terres Neuves (New Lands Street), and there could have been no better name. To this day, Terres Neuves nestles inconspicuously behind an old wooden door and forms an intrinsic part of the Belgian climbing scene.

The climbing gym landscape continued to expand with the same patterns often repeating, using well-established yet steadily evolving approaches. In old industrial warehouses, close to conurbations and in good central locations, the creative spirits and freethinkers of the climbing world attempted to create unique and attractive climbing gyms, often with minimal financial resources but a great deal of passion and personal endeavor. The time then came in 1992 for me to visit my first climbing gym when **Bronx Rock** opened on the edge of Cologne. At first, almost all climbing was done here with a top rope, as

Aber alle diese Anlagen und künstlichen Klettermöglichkeiten waren doch noch weit von den modernen Kletterhallen der heutigen Zeit entfernt. Das sollte sich erst in der 80er Jahren ändern. Der Franzose und Gründer der Firma Entre-Prises, François Savigny, entwickelte abnehmbare Klettergriffe, zuerst aus Sandstein und wenig später aus Harzbeton. Bereits 1985 stattete er die ersten Kletterwände in Frankreich damit aus.

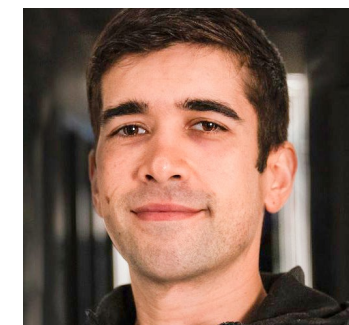
Das Jahr 1987 kann sicher als entscheidend und richtungsweisend bezeichnet werden. In Seattle in den USA und in Brüssel in Belgien öffneten die ersten, öffentlichen Kletterhallen, die den heutigen Konzepten am ähnlichsten sind. Die **Vertical World** in Seattle, die sich bis in das Jahr 1994 noch unter dem Namen Vertical Club präsentierte, und das von Marc Bott und Isabelle Dorsimond in Brüssel eröffnete **Terres Neuves** können mit ihrer Bauweise aus beschichteten Multiplexplatten und abnehmbaren Klettergriffen aus Kunstharz nicht nur als richtungsweisend, sondern auch als Vorreiter für unsere heutige Kletterhallenlandschaft bezeichnet werden.

In der Europastadt Brüssel in Belgien, nur wenige Autostunden von meiner Heimatregion Köln/Bonn entfernt, liegen also die Anfänge der europäischen Kletterhallenkultur. In einer engen, mit Kopfstein gepflasterten Straße, mitten im Szeneviertel Stalingrad wählte das Team um Marc und Isabelle seinerzeit eine alte Konservenfabrik als Basis für die erste öffentlich zugängliche Kletterhalle. Es war eine neue Welt für Kletterer und aus unternehmerischer Sicht Neuland für die beiden Gründer. Kein anderer Ort wäre geeigneter gewesen als dieses alte Industriegebäude in der Rue Terres Neuves (Neue Länder Straße), und es hätte sich kein besserer Name finden können. Bis heute versteckt sich unscheinbar hinter einer alten Holztür das Terres Neuves und ist wesentlicher Bestandteil der belgischen Kletterszene.

was subsequently the case in many of northern and western Germany's climbing gyms. It was a habit that had spilled over from Belgium and which had a marked influence on the climbing culture in parts of Germany and northern Europe. The somewhat dilapidated old factory was situated in a suburb of Cologne, the name Bronx Rock alluding to the working-class, industrial Bronx borough of New York.

Not in the Bronx, but in a neighborhood that was no less exciting or aspiring because of this – the former Gowanus industrial area of Brooklyn, New York – a climbing gym opened in 2009 that is among those having demonstrated sensational development in recent years. An inconspicuous entrance to an old newspaper factory hides the first gym opened by **Brooklyn Boulders**. This is where co-founder Lance R. Pinn and his team clearly found the right ingredients to allow Brooklyn Boulders to grow into what it is today: a climbing and bouldering gym of impressive design where sporting, artistic, and cultural scenes have created a platform for themselves.

Today often simply called BKB, Brooklyn Boulders brings the disciplines of bouldering and climbing together in a space measuring roughly 18,300 square feet (1,700 square meters), and supplements this with a diverse fitness program. But the unique thing about Brooklyn Boulders is not its sports offering. It lies in the configuration of the gym, in its versatility, its inventiveness and creativity, which create a special atmosphere. It's all about evoking a particular feeling when you enter one of Brooklyn Boulders' gyms.



LANCE R. PINN

Born: 1984

Lives in: Boston

Background: President and Co-Founder of Brooklyn Boulders

Nicht in der Bronx, aber in einem deswegen nicht weniger aufregenden und aufstrebenden Stadtviertel, dem ehemaligen Industriegebiet Gowanus in Brooklyn New York, eröffnete im Jahr 2009 eine der Kletterhallen, die in den letzten Jahren eine überaus spannende Entwicklung gezeigt haben. In einer alten Zeitungsfabrik und hinter einem unauffälligen Eingang versteckt sich die erste Halle von **Brooklyn Boulders**. Hier fand das Team um Mitbegründer Lance R. Pinn offensichtlich die richtigen Zutaten, um Brooklyn Boulders zu dem werden zu lassen, was es heute ist: eine Kletter- und



BROOKLYN BOULDERS

Built: 2009-2015

Location: currently 4 gyms in New York, Boston, Chicago, USA

About: A climbing and bouldering gym of impressive design where sporting, artistic, and cultural scenes have created a platform for themselves.

At the first site in Gowanus, the focus from the outset was on exceptional wall design. The climbing wall copy of the world-famous Brooklyn Bridge remains a major attraction and a total eyecatcher to this day. In fact, there is altogether much to see and discover. Early collaboration with renowned graffiti artists such as Cope2 from New York resulted in several large-scale pictures that still grace the walls today. Anyone who visits Brooklyn Boulders not only enters a sports venue, but also an art exhibition.

Especially during the early days in 2009, the unique spirit of the community was successfully integrated into the idea behind Brooklyn Boulders. A platform was created that offered scope to occupy spaces, to evolve, and to help shape the Brooklyn Boulders concept.

„The brand is shaped by the people,“ stresses Nicole Chernyakhovsky, Senior Director of Product. She highlights how the community-driven design particularly helped to create the unique atmosphere. It therefore comes as no surprise that co-working spaces are today a fundamental part of BKB.

Boulderhalle mit eindrucksvollem Konzept, in der sich Sport-, Kunst- und Kulturszene eine Plattform geschaffen haben.

“A CLIMBING AND BOULDERING GYM OF IMPRESSIVE DESIGN WHERE SPORTING, ARTISTIC, AND CULTURAL SCENES HAVE CREATED A PLATFORM FOR THEMSELVES.”

„EINE KLETTER- UND BOULDERHALLE MIT EINDRUCKSVOLLEM KONZEPT, IN DER SICH SPORT-, KUNST- UND KULTURSZENE EINE PLATTFORM GESCHAFFEN HABEN.“

Brooklyn Boulders, heute oft auch nur BKB genannt, vereint auf 1700m² die Disziplinen Bouldern und Klettern und ergänzt sein Angebot um ein vielseitiges Fitnessprogramm. Aber die Besonderheit von Brooklyn Boulders liegt nicht in dem Sportangebot. Die Besonderheit liegt in der Ausgestaltung der Halle, in der Vielseitigkeit, im Ideenreichtum und der Kreativität, die eine besondere Atmosphäre entstehen lässt. Es geht darum, ein besonderes Gefühl zu erzeugen, wenn du die Hallen von Brooklyn Boulders betrittst.

Am ersten Standort in Gowanus wurde von Beginn an der Fokus auf ein außergewöhnliches Wanddesign gelegt. So ist der Nachbau

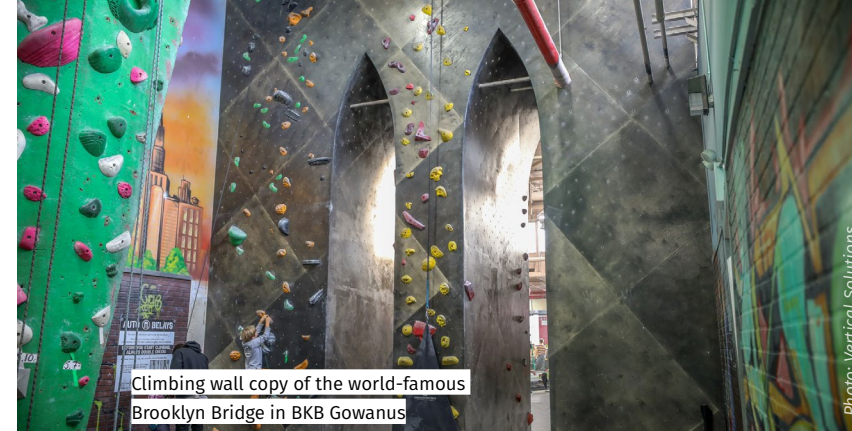
der weltberühmten Brooklyn Bridge als Kletterwand bis heute eine absolute Attraktion und ein Eyecatcher. Überhaupt gibt es viel zu sehen und zu entdecken. Durch die frühe Zusammenarbeit mit namhaften Graffiti-Künstlern wie z.B. Cope2 aus New York entstanden einige großflächige Bilder, die bis heute die Wände schmücken. Wer Brooklyn Boulders besucht, betritt nicht nur eine Sportstätte, sondern auch eine Kunstausstellung.

Gerade in den Anfängen im Jahr 2009 gelang es, den besonderen Spirit und den Geist der Gemeinschaft mit in die Idee von Brooklyn Boulders zu integrieren. Es gelang, eine Plattform zu schaffen, die Platz bot Räume zu besetzen, sich zu entfalten und das Konzept von Brooklyn Boulders mitzugestalten.

„The brand is shaped by the people – die Marke wird von den Menschen geprägt,“ betont Nicole Chernyakhovsky, Senior Director of Product. Sie hebt hervor, dass gerade durch das gemeinschaftsgesteuerte Gestalten eine besondere Atmosphäre entstanden ist. Es ist also nicht verwunderlich, dass Co-working Spaces heute zum elementaren Bestandteil von BKB gehören.

Mit dem Bewusstsein, dass sich ein besonderer „Vibe“ nicht in eine Flasche abfüllen und weitergeben lässt, wagte man es 2013 einen weiteren Standort in Boston zu eröffnen. Die Halle in Somerville vervollständigt das Konzept aus Gowanus in einzigartiger Weise. Ins Auge stechen nicht nur die vielen großen Kunstwerke und Graffitis, sondern ein auffallendes Kletterwand-Design mit geschwungenen Formen in auffälliger Holzoptik. Es scheint ein erklärtes Ziel von BKB zu sein, zusammen mit dem amerikanischen Kletterwandbauer Vertical Solutions nicht nur Kletterwände, sondern Kunstwerke entstehen zu lassen. Auch der Standort Boston vereint Arbeit, Sport und Freizeit unter einem Dach und unterstreicht damit seinen Anspruch, mehr zu sein als nur eine Kletterhalle. Zurecht beschreibt sich Brooklyn Boulders daher als Lifestyle-Einrichtung, die Gemeinschaften rund um Klettern, Kunst, Kultur und Fitness entstehen lässt. Das moderne und ganzheitliche Fitnesskonzept mit dem Namen BKBX gehört daher ebenso zum Konzept wie das Outdoorprogramm BKB-Wild.

Mit der Eröffnung ihrer Halle in einem luxuriösen, modernen Wohngebäude im New Yorker Stadtteil Queensbridge im Jahr 2015 unterstrichen BKB ihren Anspruch kontrovers zu sein. Und tatsächlich könnte der Kontrast zwischen einer alten Papierfabrik und einem neuen Bürokomplex nicht größer sein. In den kommenden Jahren plant BKB wei-



Climbing wall copy of the world-famous Brooklyn Bridge in BKB Gowanus

Photo: Vertical Solutions

Fully aware that you can't simply bottle a particular vibe and pass it on, the owners ventured to open a second venue in Boston in 2013. The gym in Somerville complements the Gowanus concept in singular fashion. There are not only many large works of art and graffiti that catch the eye, but also a striking climbing wall design with sweeping curves in a beautiful wood aesthetic. It would appear that BKB's stated objective is to create works of art, not just climbing walls, with US wall builder Vertical Solutions.

The site in Boston likewise combines work, sport and leisure under one roof, and thus underscores its ambition to be more than just a climbing gym. Brooklyn Boulders thus rightly describes itself as a lifestyle facility that fosters community through climbing, art, culture, and fitness. The modern, holistic fitness concept by the name of BKBX therefore belongs as equally to the concept as does the outdoor program BKB Wild.

By opening a climbing gym in a luxury apartment building in the New York neighborhood of Queensbridge in 2015, BKB emphasized its desire to be controversial. And, in point of fact, the contrast between an old

tere Anlagen und man darf schon jetzt gespannt sein, welche neuen Ideen und Ansätze entstehen werden.

Die Dynamik in der rasanten Entwicklung von neuen Ideen und spannenden Konzepten in der Kletterhallenlandschaft ist sicherlich unter anderem auf den Boom des Boulderns und der Boulderhallen zurückzuführen. Die im Vergleich zum Seilklettern deutlich niedrigeren Wände ermöglichen es, leichter geeignete und vielseitige Immobilien zu finden. So kann man mit dem Sport tiefer in die Stadtzentren und urbanen Ballungsräume vorstoßen. Zunehmend multifunktionale Konzepte verfolgen dabei das Ziel, ein breiteres Publikum und eine größere Zielgruppe anzusprechen.

So ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass sich seit der Eröffnung von **The Spot Bouldering Gym** (Boulder, Colorado, USA) im Jahr 2002, der wahrscheinlich ersten reinen Boulderhalle, auch die Konzepte hinter den vielen Boulderhallen stark weiterentwickelt haben.

Eine dieser Weiterentwicklungen, welche derzeit besonders viel Aufmerksamkeit erfährt, sind die Boulderhallen von **arkose&co** in Frankreich. Ich bin neugierig geworden, was sich hinter dem Konzept versteckt, welches gerade im Jahr 2019 in der internationalen Hallenbetreiber-Szene in aller Munde ist. Ich fahre kurzentschlossen von Köln nach Paris, um tiefer einzutauchen in die Welt von arkose&co.

Im Zentrum von Paris, im 20. Arrondissement in der Nähe der Place de la Nation, befindet sich das Herz und der Firmensitz von arkose&co. Fast wäre ich an dem unscheinbaren Hinterhofeingang vorbeigelaufen, als ich auf der Rue des Grands Champs auf der Suche nach dem **Arkose Nation** war, der wohl ersten offiziellen Boulderhalle im Stadtgebiet von Paris.



Brooklyn Boulders in Gowanus, New York in an old newspaper factory.

Photo: Vertical Solutions



Cooperation with renowned artists is a core element of BKB

Photo: Brooklyn Boulders

newspaper factory and a new office complex couldn't be greater. BKB is planning further facilities over the coming years and it will be fascinating to see the new ideas and approaches that will come out of these.

The dynamism in the rapid development of new ideas and exciting concepts on the climbing gym scene is surely due in part to the boom in bouldering and bouldering gyms. Thanks to their significantly lower wall height compared to roped climbing, it is far easier to find suitable, versatile real estate for them. This allows the sport to venture deeper into downtown areas and conurbations. Here, increasingly multifunctional concepts strive to appeal to wider audiences and larger target groups.

It's not surprising that the opening in 2002 of **The Spot Bouldering Gym** (Boulder, Colorado, USA), which was probably the first gym specifically dedicated to bouldering, marked the start of a sharp increase in the development of the concepts behind the many bouldering gyms that were to follow.

One such example, which is receiving a lot of attention at present, are the **arkose&co** bouldering gyms in France. I was curious to discover more about the concept that everyone on the international gym operator scene seems to have been talking about in 2019, so I made a spontaneous trip from Cologne to Paris to dive deeper into the world of arkose&co.

The heart and headquarters of arkose&co is located in the center of Paris in the 20th arrondissement near the Place de la Nation.

As I walk down Rue des Grands Champs searching for **Arkose Nation**, which was likely the first official bouldering gym in Paris, I almost miss the inconspicuous rear courtyard entrance.

The beige façade, the wooden gray double doors, the scattering of round, typically French café tables on the sidewalk, and the blue enamel building number sign displaying 35 don't exactly suggest that one of the most popular bouldering gyms in and around Paris can be found behind these walls.

However, the picture changes dramatically as soon as I walk through the large, open double doors and enter Nation's small inner courtyard. I am greeted by a colorful, warm foyer and I'm not sure at first whether I've stepped into a trendy café or a bouldering gym. Were it not for the small, painstakingly designed shop stocked with products from the in-house climbing brand Snap that I see out of the corner of my eye or the slight smell of sweat lingering in the air, I would be convinced that I had strayed into a beautifully decorated bar and restaurant.

Eine beige Hausfassade, eine graue Doppelflügeltür aus Holz, ein paar typisch runde, französische Cafétische auf dem Bürgersteig und ein blaues Emailleschild mit der Hausnummer 35 – das alles deutet nicht unbedingt darauf hin, dass sich hier eine der beliebtesten Boulderhallen des Pariser Umlands befindet.

Doch das Bild ändert sich schlagartig, wenn man durch die großen, offen stehenden Doppelflügeltüren den kleinen Innenhof des „Nation“, betritt. Farbenfroh und warm gestaltet sich der Eingangsbereich. Ich bin mir zunächst nicht sicher, ob ich mich in einem angesagten Szenecafé oder in einer Boulderhalle befinde. Würde nicht im Eingangsbereich ein kleiner, liebevoll gestalteter Shop, bestückt mit Produkten der hauseigenen Klettermarke „Snap“ in meinen Blickfang geraten und ein leichter Geruch von Schweiß in der Luft liegen, wäre ich davon überzeugt, in einer außergewöhnlich ansprechenden Bar mit Restaurant gestrandet zu sein.

Ich treffe Grégoire de Belmont, einen der vier führenden Köpfe hinter dem Konzept von arkose&co und bin sehr gespannt, welche Überraschungen sich noch in dem alten, verwinkelten und verbauten Fabrikgebäude verstecken.

Doch bevor wir die ersten Boulderwände erreichen betreten wir einen geräumigen und gemütlichen Restaurant-Bereich mit unterschiedlichsten Sitzgelegenheiten. Auch hier stechen mir die vielen kreativen Gestaltungsmerkmale und die Kunst ins Auge. Ein großes, offenes Fenster ermöglicht einen Blick in eine großzügige und

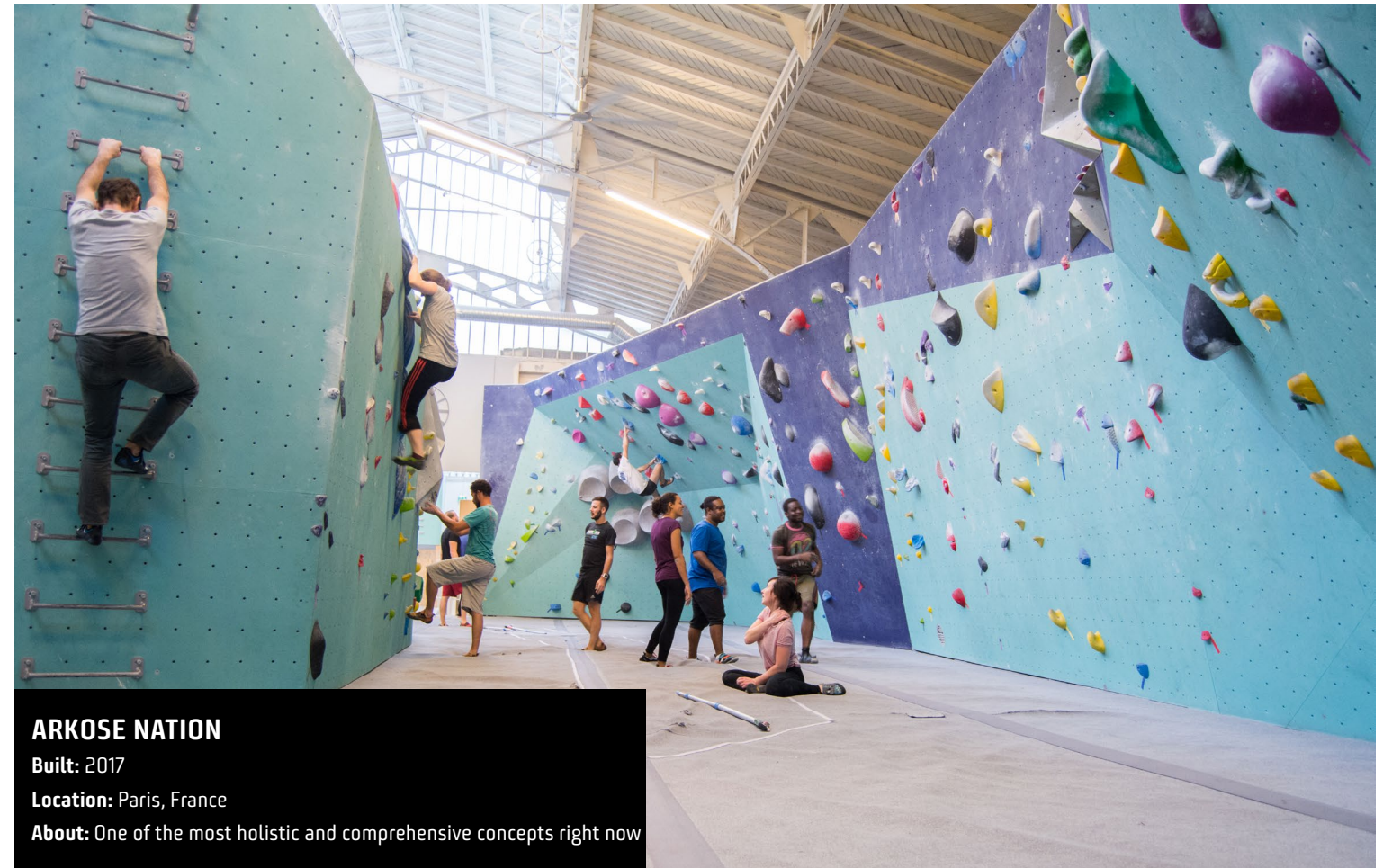
hochprofessionell ausgestattete Küche. Mir wird sofort klar, dass sich hier das gastronomische Angebot deutlich von dem anderer Kletterhallen unterscheidet.

Das Restaurant hat täglich von 12.00 bis 14.30 und von 19.30 bis 22.45 Uhr geöffnet und Grégoire erklärt mir, dass es natürlich nur hausgemachte und frische Speisen aus überwiegend regionalen Produkten gibt. Auf der Karte stehen großteils vegetarische Gerichte, einige davon können um Fleisch oder Fisch aus artgerechter, biologischer und nachhaltiger Haltung ergänzt werden. „Uns geht es darum, die Leute auf einen bewussteren Fleischkonsum aufmerksam zu machen“, betont Grégoire. Bei der Auswahl der Speisen wird dieser Ansatz berücksichtigt.

Mir fällt auf, dass ein attraktiver Kinderbereich unmittelbar an den Gastronomiebereich angrenzt – eines der Kernelemente im Konzept von arkose&co. „Wir haben viele Gäste, die nicht wegen des Boulderns zu uns kommen. Einige Eltern genießen es, hier in gemütlicher Atmosphäre etwas zu essen, Kaffee zu trinken und sich entspannt zu unter-

“A LOT OF OUR GUESTS DON'T COME HERE FOR THE BOULDERING.”

„WIR HABEN VIELE GÄSTE, DIE NICHT WEGEN DES BOULDERNS ZU UNS KOMMEN.“



ARKOSE NATION
Built: 2017
Location: Paris, France
About: One of the most holistic and comprehensive concepts right now

I meet Grégoire de Belmont, one of the four masterminds behind the arkose&co concept, eager to find out what surprises lie in wait for me in the winding and redeveloped old factory building.

But before we even reach the first bouldering walls, he leads me into a spacious, cozy restaurant with a wide range of seating. Here, too, I'm immediately struck by the many creative design features and works of art on display. A large, open window allows me to glimpse the sizable, very professionally equipped kitchen. It's immediately clear that the catering options on offer here are far superior to those in other climbing gyms.

The restaurant is open daily from 12pm to 2:30pm and from 7:30pm to 10:45pm and Grégoire explains that it only serves homemade, fresh dishes made largely from regional products. The menu mainly comprises vegetarian dishes, including a few with the option of adding ethically sourced, organic, sustainable meat or fish. "One of our aims is to make people more mindful of their meat consumption," says Grégoire, which is an approach reflected in the choices available on the menu.

Right next to the restaurant, I spot an attractive children's play area – one of the core elements of arkose&co's approach. "A lot of our guests don't come here for the bouldering. Some parents like to have something to eat, drink a coffee, and relax and chat in homely surroundings while their children have fun in the bouldering area," Grégoire tells me. As a father of three, I understand this only too well. It is soon clear



GRÉGOIRE DE BELMONT
Born: 1976
Lives in: Paris
Background: General Manager arkose&co

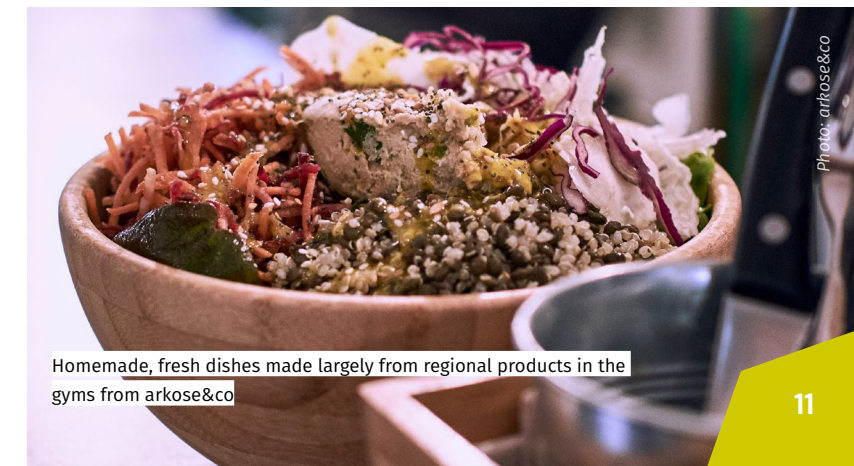
halten, während sich ihre Kinder im Boulderbereich vergnügen", erklärt mir Grégoire. Als Vater von drei Kindern kann ich diesen Ansatz sehr gut verstehen. An der Stelle wird deutlich, dass das Konzept von arkose&co nicht nur auf die Sportler, die Boulderer fokussiert ist, sondern auch auf die Anwohner und jungen Familien im Quartier.

Der Boulderbereich ist bereits am frühen Nachmittag gut gefüllt, fast erscheint mir die 1000m² große Kletterfläche ein wenig zu klein. Der sehr zentrale Standort im Stadtzentrum von Paris macht es kaum möglich, größere Flächen innerhalb eines Gebäudes zu bekommen und daher ist bereits für 2020 die Eröffnung weiterer, vergleichbarer Anlagen in anderen Bezirken (Arrondissements) geplant. Bei genauerer Betrachtung des Boulderbereichs fällt mir auf, dass ich kaum wirklich „konsumierbare“ Boulder finde. Die Boulder sind anspruchsvoll geschraubt und auch in den einfacheren Problemen werden abwechslungsreiche



arkose&co brews its own line of craft beers.

Photo: arkose&co



Homemade, fresh dishes made largely from regional products in the gyms from arkose&co

that arkose&co not only focuses on athletes and boulderers, but also targets local residents and young families.

The bouldering area is already packed by the early afternoon, and the climbing area of roughly 10,700 square feet (1,000 square meters) seems almost too small. The very central location in the heart of Paris makes it virtually impossible to find a building with a larger amount of floor space, which is why there are already plans in place to open additional, similar centers in other areas of the city in 2020. On closer inspection of the bouldering area, I realize that there aren't really any "consumable" boulders. They all appear challenging and even the simpler problems require a range of movements and techniques to solve. In an effort to encourage their customers to engage more deeply with the sport, the arkose&co team avoid setting basic "ladder climbs" or "left-to-right combinations" on their boulders.

Our tour takes us into the building's basement, and as we close one of the doors behind us, it immediately falls silent. We've entered the yoga and physiotherapy area. I feel as if we've been whisked away from the bouldering gym and transported into a peaceful practice, a truly relaxing oasis of calm.

After passing another two doors, I suddenly find myself surrounded by beer barrels, beer bottles, and bottling machines in the on-site brewery. Under the brand name Oskare, the company brews its own line of craft beers. In the basement under Arkose Nation, up to 150,000 liters of beer are brewed every year before being bottled and delivered to local pubs and the Arkose gyms in the area around Paris. With sustainability in mind, this is all done by delivery bike and electric car, of course.

Bewegungen und Techniken abverlangt. Beim Thema Bouldern möchte das Team von arkose&co ihre Kunden auffordern, sich intensiver mit dem Sport zu beschäftigen und so wird darauf verzichtet, einfache „Leitern“ oder „links-rechts Kombinationen“ zu schrauben.

Unser Weg führt uns weiter ins Untergeschoss des Gebäudes. Hinter einer Tür wird es plötzlich ruhig. Wir haben den Yoga- und Physiotherapiebereich betreten. Mir erscheint es fast so, als hätten wir von einem auf den anderen Augenblick die Boulderhalle verlassen und einen entspannten, ruhigen Praxis und einen wahren Ort der Erholung betreten. Zwei Türen weiter stehe ich plötzlich umgeben von Bierfässern, Bierflaschen und Abfüllanlagen in der firmeneigenen Bierbrauerei. Mit der Marke „Oskare“ wurde ein eigenes Bier mit verschiedenen Craft-Bier Spezialitäten entwickelt. Heute werden im Keller unter dem Nation, jährlich bis zu 150.000 Liter Bier gebraut, abgefüllt und von hier aus in benachbarte Kneipen und die Arkose-Hallen im Umland von Paris gebracht. Selbstverständlich mit Lastenrad und Elektroauto, ganz im Sinne der Nachhaltigkeit!

Überhaupt steht das Thema Nachhaltigkeit und soziale, gesellschaftliche Verantwortung bei arkose&co ganz oben auf der Liste. Wahrscheinlich sind sie die ersten Boulderhallenbetreiber mit einem eigenen Mitarbeiter für CSR, der sich für alle 15 Hallen in Frankreich und bei allen weiteren Unternehmensbereichen ganz dem Thema Corporate Social Responsibility widmet. So überrascht es nicht, dass man derzeit prüft, ob man nicht eigene Lebensmittel für die Gastronomie anbauen oder noch konsequenter mit regionalen Bauern zusammenarbeiten kann.

Sustainability and social responsibility are given top priority at arkose&co. In fact, the company may well be the first bouldering gym operator to employ a CSR manager – a member of staff dedicated to corporate social responsibility across all 15 gyms in France and all other areas of the business. It's hardly surprising that the company is currently checking whether it would be feasible to produce its own food to serve to customers or to work even more closely with local farmers.

The concept behind arkose&co is certainly one of the most holistic and comprehensive I've ever come across. The company already has its own bouldering gyms, restaurants, climbing brand, brewery, and climbing holds. Over the next few years, it is planning to open additional gyms under the motto "natural urban climbing", and I can only assume that the lines between sport, lifestyle, and food and drink will become even more blurred.

It seems to me that there's currently a trend towards multifunctional climbing and bouldering gyms that are increasingly trying to bring together the areas of sport, culture, and gastronomy. But why not simply focus on the essentials and place climbing at the heart of operations?

Perhaps that's why the **KI – Kletterzentrum Innsbruck** in Austria has made such a name for itself. After a preliminary planning and construction period of almost ten years, one of the world's largest and most state-of-the-art sport climbing facilities opened here in 2017.

The KI comprises a total climbing area of around 66,700 square feet (6,200 square meters) across a footprint of roughly 42,000 square feet (3,900 square meters). Built at a cost of 12 million euros, the center is owned by the city of Innsbruck and is operated by Alpenverein Kletterzentrum Innsbruck GmbH. However, anyone who thinks that a climbing gym of this scale could only be impersonal and sterile would be seriously mistaken!

The man behind the concept and the overall idea for this huge site is none other than climbing pioneer, experienced developer, successful trainer, and former managing director of the famous Tivoli climbing gym, Reini Scherer. The center is a reflection of his longstanding experience in climbing and the climbing industry. Reini has had an incredible influence on the origin and development of indoor climbing, route setting, and competitive climbing, and can look back on a successful career as a youth trainer and trainer of the Austrian national team.

The KI is home to the training center for the Austrian national team and is unique in the way it combines facilities for both professional and recreational climbers. It is therefore equally appealing to elite climbers and national teams from around the world, as well as amateur climbers from Innsbruck and climbing gym tourists from near and far.

The climbing center stands out in particular for its spacious, bright interior design. Its cutting-edge, large climbing walls lend themselves perfectly to modern, varied route setting. The designers seem to have deliberately refrained from using embellishments and plays on color. Instead, the largely gray walls fitted with an impressive array of the latest types of holds underpin its ambition to be

Das Konzept hinter arkose&co kann ganz sicher als eines der Ganzheitlichsten und Vollständigsten betrachtet werden. Dahinter steht eine Firma mit eigenen Boulderhallen, eigenen Restaurants, eigener Klettermarke, eigener Brauerei und eigenen Klettergriffen. In den nächsten Jahren ist unter dem Motto „natural urban climbing“ die Eröffnung weiterer Anlagen vorgesehen und man kann davon ausgehen, dass die Grenze von Sport zu Lifestyle und kulinarischen Angeboten weiter verschwimmen wird.

Es erscheint mir fast, als gäbe es derzeit einen Trend hin zu multifunktionalen Kletter- und Boulderhallen, die immer stärker versuchen, die Bereiche Sport, Kultur und Gastronomie verschmelzen zu lassen und zu besetzen. Aber warum nicht einfach auf das Wesentliche fokussieren und den Sport ganz in den Mittelpunkt stellen?

Vielleicht ist genau das der Grund, warum das **KI – Kletterzentrum Innsbruck** derzeit so erfolgreich und in aller Munde ist. Im Jahr 2017 eröffnete hier nach fast 10-jähriger Vorlauf-, Planungs- und Bauzeit, eine der größten und modernsten Sportkletteranlagen der Welt.

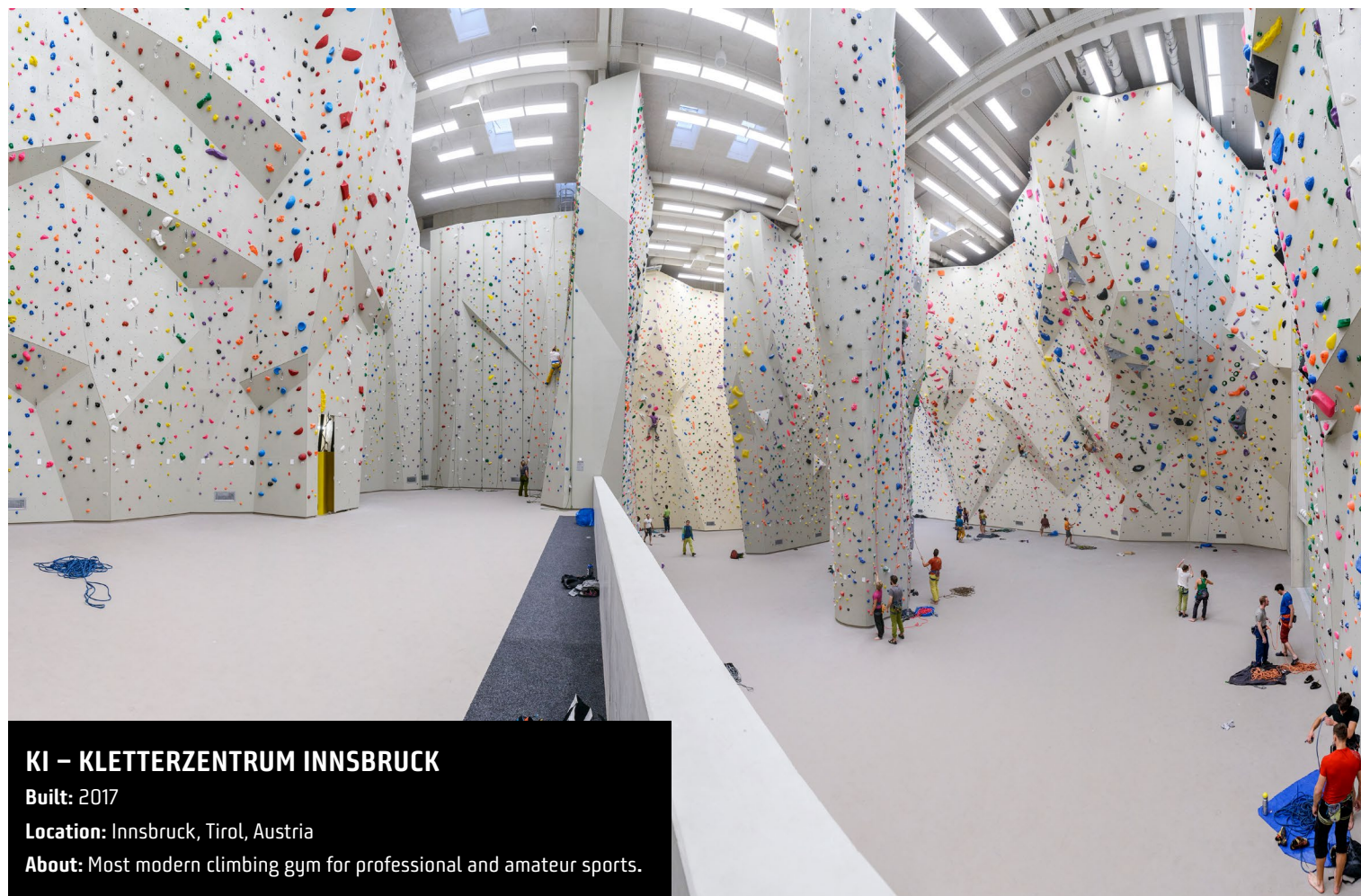
Das KI bietet auf einer Grundfläche von 3900m² insgesamt 6200m² Kletterfläche. Eigentümer des 12 Mio Euro teuren Bauwerks ist die Stadt Innsbruck, betrieben wird die Anlage heute von der Alpenverein Kletterzentrum Innsbruck GmbH. Wer jetzt aber meint, dass sich hinter diesen Fakten und Zahlen nur eine anonyme und sterile Sportstätte versteckt, der irrt gewaltig!

Kein geringerer als Kletterpionier, Erschließer vieler Neutouren, Erfolgstrainer und ehemaliger Geschäftsführer des berühmten Kletterzentrum Tivoli, Reini Scherer, steckt hinter dem Konzept und der Gesamtidee dieser großen Anlage. Hier findet sich all seine langjährige Erfahrung im Klettern und in der Kletterbranche wieder. Reini hat die Anfänge und die Entwicklung des Indoorkletterns, des Routenbaus und des Wettkampfkletterns maßgeblich mitgeprägt. Er kann auf große Erfolge in der Nachwuchsförderung und als Trainer der österreichischen Nationalmannschaft zurückblicken.

Das KI beherbergt das Bundesleistungszentrum Österreichs und verbindet in einzigartiger Weise Spitzen- und Breitensport. So ist es zu einer Sportanlage geworden, die heute die Kletterelite und die Nationalmannschaften dieser Welt, aber auch den Freizeitsportler aus Innsbruck und die Kletterhallentouristen von nah und fern gleichermaßen anspricht.

Das Kletterzentrum fällt besonders durch die großzügige und helle Raumgestaltung auf. Die modernen, großflächigen Kletterwände ermöglichen einen zeitgemäßen und abwechslungsreichen Routenbau. Auf Schnörkel und Farbspielereien wurde offensichtlich bewusst verzichtet. Die weitestgehend in grau gehaltenen Wände, imposant beschraubt mit einem umfassenden und aktuellen Griffsortiment bekräftigen den Anspruch, eine moderne Kletterhalle, Trainings- und Wettkampfstätte zu sein. Das ansprechende und beeindruckende Gesamtdesign der Anlage spricht eine eindeutige Sprache: „Just climbing, nothing else!“

Aber natürlich bietet das KI als zeitgemäße Kletterhalle auch ein umfangreicheres Angebot. Selbstverständlich gibt es einen funktionalen, modernen Fitnessbereich,



KI – KLETTERZENTRUM INNSBRUCK

Built: 2017

Location: Innsbruck, Tirol, Austria

About: Most modern climbing gym for professional and amateur sports.

“THE APPEALING, STRIKING OVERALL DESIGN CLEARLY SAYS: ‘JUST CLIMBING, NOTHING ELSE!’”

„DAS ANSPRECHENDE UND BEEINDRUCKENDE GESAMTDESIGN DER ANLAGE SPRICHT EINE EINDEUTIGE SPRACHE: ‚JUST CLIMBING, NOTHING ELSE!’“

a modern climbing gym, training center, and competition venue. The appealing, striking overall design clearly says: "Just climbing, nothing else!"

As a modern climbing gym, however, the KI offers a whole lot more besides climbing, including, of course, a functional, up-to-date fitness studio where top athletes can carry out supplementary, recovery, and strength training. The KI also features a children's climbing area, bistro, seminar rooms, and a wide range of courses. However, all these extras and supplementary offers are very much in the background, as the main focus is clearly on climbing.

The way in which everything revolves around sport climbing and its disciplines of lead, speed, and bouldering is highly impressive. During the 2018 World Championships, which were hosted in Innsbruck, all eyes were on the potential of the then new KI as a competition venue. The KI's success in terms of visitor numbers and international renown has given the operators confidence that they chose the right path, and backs up their determination to "not let their gym be degraded to a substitute fitness studio." In a detailed interview, Reini Scherer (page 20) shares with us his thoughts on the design, construction, and operation of the KI.

It's impossible to tell whether one concept or approach is better or has greater chances of success than another. But what I can say for certain is that sport climbing continues to be developed with boundless creativity. The inventiveness with which new structures and places to climb are created is still as unabated as it was in the past. And, who knows, perhaps architects will one day integrate artificial climbing walls into the staircases of family homes as a matter of course.

der dem Spitzensportler das entsprechende Ergänzungs-, Ausgleichs-, und Krafttraining ermöglicht. Auch im KI gibt es einen Kinderkletterbereich, Gastronomie, Seminarräume und ein umfassendes Kursangebot. Jedoch werden all diese Extras und Zusatzangebote nicht in den Vordergrund gehoben: Hier geht es vor allem ums Klettern.

Auf beeindruckende Weise steht hier in Innsbruck der Klettersport mit seinen Disziplinen Lead, Speed und Bouldern im Fokus. Bei der Weltmeisterschaft 2018, der Heim-WM in Innsbruck, die in dem noch jungen KI stattfand, wurde das Potential der Anlage für jeden sichtbar unter Beweis gestellt. Der Erfolg, gemessen an Besucherzahlen und internationaler Bekanntheit, gibt den Betreibern recht und untermauert den Anspruch, sich „nicht als Fitnessstudio-Ersatzhalle degradieren zu lassen“. In einem ausführlichen Interview (Seite 20) teilt Reini Scherer seine Gedanken über Konzeption, Umsetzung und Betrieb des KI mit uns.

Es lässt sich nicht sagen, ob ein Konzept besser ist, ob ein Ansatz mehr Erfolg verspricht als die anderen. Aber mit Sicherheit lässt sich sagen, dass früher wie heute der Klettersport mit uneingeschränkter Kreativität weiterentwickelt wird. Der Ideenreichtum, mit welchem neue Strukturen und Kletterumgebungen geschaffen werden, ist ungebrochen. Und wer weiß, vielleicht werden künstliche Kletterwände auch in den Treppenhäusern einfacher Einfamilienhäuser in Zukunft irgendwann zur Selbstverständlichkeit und gehören zum Standard architektonischer Planung.

CHRISTIAN POPIEN

Born: 1978

Lives in: Gummersbach, Germany

Background: CEO Climb-Inn Klettersport GmbH & Co. KG, certified social pedagogue / social worker

Christian Popien started climbing at the young age of 11. Since then, he has been involved in the sport on both a personal and professional level. He is the co-founder and managing director of Climb-Inn Klettersport GmbH & Co. KG, he has operated the DAV Kletterzentrum Wupperwände since 2006, and has been the co-owner of the Bahnhof Blo Bouldercafé Wuppertal since 2016. As one of five creative minds, Christian developed the HardMoves Boulder League from 2007 to 2016 into one of the largest bouldering events in Europe. Today, he works closely together with the German Alpine Association developing and publishing concepts and standards, and since 2013, he has increasingly specialised in consulting and renovation of climbing gyms. Christian lives together with his wife and 3 sons in Gummersbach.

Christian Popien begann im jungen Alter von 11 Jahren mit dem Klettern. Seitdem begleitet ihn der Sport nicht nur auf privater sondern vor allem auf beruflicher Ebene. Er ist Mitbegründer und Geschäftsführer der Firma Climb-Inn Klettersport GmbH & Co. KG., betreibt seit 2006 das DAV Kletterzentrum Wupperwände und ist seit 2016 der Mitinhaber des Bahnhof Blo-Bouldercafés Wuppertal. Als einer von fünf kreativen Köpfen hat Christian von 2007 bis 2016 die HardMoves-Boulderleague zu einem der größten Boulder-Events Europas ausgebaut. Heute arbeitet er eng mit dem Deutschen Alpenverein zusammen, entwickelt und publiziert Konzepte und Standards und spezialisiert sich seit 2013 zunehmend auf die Beratung und Sanierungsberatung von Kletterhallen in allen Fragen rund um das Hallenmanagement. Christian lebt zusammen mit seiner Frau und seinen drei Söhnen in Gummersbach.

Photo: Christopher Pattberg



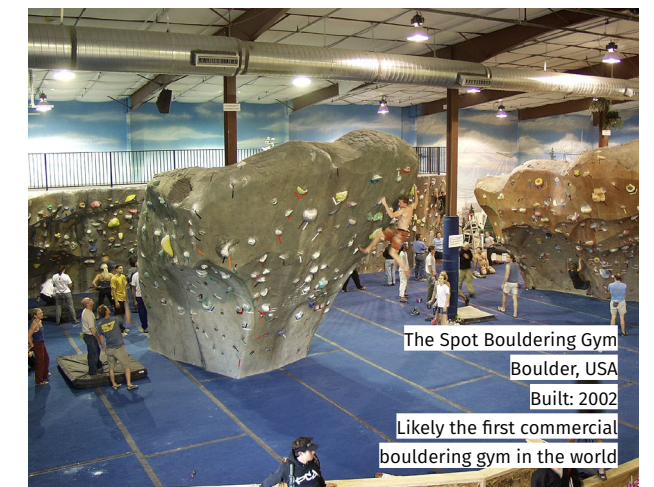
A SMALL SELECTION OF SPECIAL CLIMBING GYMS



DAV Boulder- und Kletterzentrum Thalkirchen
Munich, Germany
Built: 1989
Largest climbing gym in the world 7,750m²



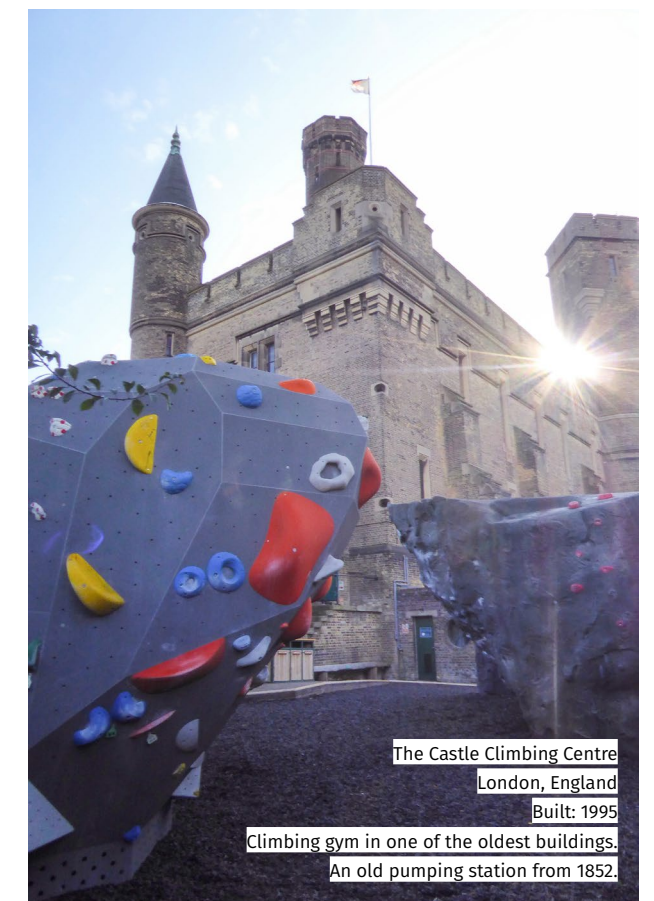
Boulderwelt München Ost
Munich, Germany
Built: 2019
Boulderwelt Munich East 2.0 on the top three levels of a multi-story building with an amazing view over Munich City



The Spot Bouldering Gym
Boulder, USA
Built: 2002
Likely the first commercial bouldering gym in the world



Edinburgh International Climbing Arena: Ratho
Edinburgh, Scotland, GB
Built: 2003
Built in a disused quarry, it is one of the largest indoor climbing walls in the world.



The Castle Climbing Centre
London, England
Built: 1995
Climbing gym in one of the oldest buildings. An old pumping station from 1852.



INTERVIEW: CHRISTIAN POPIEN / PHOTO: MARC BOTT

ISABELLE DORSIMOND

INTERVIEW WITH ISABELLE DORSIMOND (TERRES NEUVES, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM)

CP: You started climbing at a very young age and were already winning competitions in the mid-1980s. The first major international climbing competition on artificial holds took place in Grenoble in 1987, when the development of artificial holds and walls was still in its infancy. What made you decide to open a climbing gym in the center of Brussels?

Isabelle: In 1984, my friend Marc Bott and I set up Évasions Verticales, a not-for-profit organization that runs cliff- and mountain-climbing excursions and lessons. Our aim – the ultimate end goal – was to make a living from something we were both passionate about. The turning point came in 1986 when we met Pierre D'haenens, then a building contractor and a fellow climber. He told us about his successful forays into making resin climbing holds and was keen to come with me to my next climbing competition in the Lyon suburb of Vaulx-en-Velin, France, to meet Jean-Marc Blanche, the Frenchman who had manufactured the holds we would be climbing on. Everything took off in early 1987, when we signed a lease for 28 Rue Terre-Neuve in the center of Brussels, Belgium. Tucked away at the rear of the building, we were won over by the internal layout of this two-story former canning factory, with its 12m-high central column and glass roof that let the light flood in. Half of the space was given over to the production workshop managed by Pierre and his fledgling company, while the other half was used by the not-for-profit Évasions Verticales to test the new walls, welcome the city's climbers and, of course, allow me to train more regularly in

ENTRETIEN AVEC ISABELLE DORSIMOND (TERRES NEUVES, BRUXELLES, BELGIQUE)

CP: Vous avez commencé l'escalade très tôt et aviez déjà gagné des compétitions au milieu des années 80. La première grande compétition internationale d'escalade sur prises artificielles a eu lieu à Grenoble en 1987. Le développement des prises et des murs artificiels en était à ses débuts. Qu'est-ce qui vous a poussé à ouvrir une salle d'escalade au centre de Bruxelles ?

Isabelle: Avec mon ami Marc Bott, nous avons depuis 1984 notre association Évasions Verticales qui proposait des sorties et des stages en falaise et en montagne. Vivre de notre passion était le but, la nécessité vitale. En 86, la rencontre avec Pierre D'haenens, alors entrepreneur en bâtiment et grimpeur lui aussi, est décisive : il nous conte ses tentatives fructueuses de fabrication de prises d'escalade en résine et son désir de m'accompagner à ma prochaine compétition d'escalade à Vaulx-en-Velin, dans la banlieue de Lyon, pour y rencontrer Jean-Marc Blanche, fabricant français des prises sur lesquelles nous allons grimper. Ensuite, tout s'accélère, début 87, nous louons le 28 de la rue Terre-Neuve au centre de Bruxelles. Cet arrière-bâtiment de deux étages, une ancienne conserverie, nous séduit par sa disposition intérieure: une colonne centrale de 12 m de haut sous une verrière laissant circuler la lumière. La moitié de l'espace est consacrée à l'atelier de fabrication géré par Pierre et sa jeune société, l'autre moitié est destinée à l'asbl Évasions Verticales pour tester les nouveaux murs, accueillir les grimpeurs citadins et, bien sûr, me permettre de m'en-

preparation for upcoming international competitions. I wanted to be competing on a level with the big names in women's climbing at that time – the Lynn Hills and Catherine Destivelles – by training every day on indoor walls, meaning I didn't have to worry about not getting to the cliffs on Belgium's (many) wet days.

CP: There weren't any facilities like this at the time or models you could follow. You were venturing into unknown territory, as the name of your gym suggests... What was the intention or meaning behind the name "Terres Neuves"?

Isabelle: It's the name of the street that the building is on, so it perhaps wasn't too tricky a decision! But it's a nice name, and one that conjures up the idea of new horizons, places or hobbies...

CP: Were you worried the project might fail?

Isabelle: In 1987, the Belgian climbing scene was pretty small. There were a few hundred members of the Club Alpin and other hiking and caving clubs who would go and train on rocks in the Ardennes, with the aim of climbing the big faces of the Alps. Setting up an artificial climbing wall bang in the city center, where you climbed on resin holds, indoors, with no views, birdsong or the feeling of the wind beneath your helmet was unthinkable. Impossible! And, to top it all, you'd have to pay to climb?! Few people believed in it, but they all came anyway, first to take a look, and then to get hands-on...

CP: The climbing gym is located in a former canning factory. What did you do to transform the building? Did you have any trouble getting its owner to buy into your vision?

Isabelle: We were more interested in climbing than business, so we rented the building for 20 years, taking down walls and floors bit by bit as the money came in to expand the climbable areas. For the first ten years – perhaps won over by the (modest) reputation I had at the time – the owner was very amenable and enthusiastic about letting us transform his building. But after that, he suddenly became jittery and started trying to put obstacles in our way with lawyers and legal proceedings. Fortunately (or unfortunately), he died and we got a good deal on buying the building from his heir, who had no interest in keeping it.

CP: I started top rope climbing on artificial walls as a child, aged 11, in 1989. In the early 1990s, Bronx Rock in Hürth-Efferen (just outside Cologne, Germany) was the first gym to open in our area. Top roping was the norm in the early days and became standard in west and north Germany. You only offered top roping to start with, is that right?

Isabelle: Yes, we only do top rope climbing at Terres Neuves. Given the structure of the building, the small surface area at ground level and the high numbers of visitors, it would be too dangerous to offer lead climbing. We don't have the space to expand and offer other facilities that would be better suited to newer developments, such as bouldering and lead climbing, so instead, our focus is on our gym's cozy, welcoming and attractive feel, and above all the quality of our route setting, and the fact that we regularly change our routes! For us, ladder-style routes, which develop only strength and endurance,

traîner plus régulièrement en vue des compétitions internationales à venir. L'idée est de rivaliser avec les Lynn Hill, Catherine Destivelle et autres grimpeuses du moment par un entraînement quotidien sur murs indoor, en oubliant les falaises les (nombreux) jours pluvieux de Belgique.

CP: Il n'y avait pas de structure comparable ni d'exemple que vous auriez pu suivre. Vous vous aventuriez donc sur un terrain inconnu, ce que vous avez exprimé dans le nom de votre salle. Quelle était l'intention ou la signification derrière le nom « Terres Neuves » ?

Isabelle: C'est le nom de la rue où se trouve le bâtiment... C'était un peu facile mais c'est joli et ça suggère nouvel horizon, nouveau lieu, nouvelle activité..

CP: Aviez-vous peur que le projet soit un échec ?

Isabelle: En 87, le monde de l'escalade belge était assez restreint : les quelques centaines de membres du Club alpin et autres clubs de randonnée ou de spéléo allaient s'entraîner sur les rochers des Ardennes avec l'objectif de gravir les grandes parois des Alpes. Créer un espace artificiel en plein centre-ville pour y grimper sur de la résine, entre quatre murs, sans la vue, sans le chant des oiseaux ni le vent sous le casque... Impensable ! Impossible ! Et en plus, devoir payer pour grimper ? Peu y ont cru mais tous sont venus, d'abord pour voir puis pour toucher...

CP: La salle d'escalade est dans une ancienne conserverie! Comment avez-vous fait pour le bâtiment ? Ça a été difficile de faire adhérer le propriétaire au concept ?

Isabelle: Plus intéressés par la grimpe que par les affaires, nous avons loué ce bâtiment pendant 20 ans en abattant les murs et les étages petit à petit, en fonction de l'argent qui rentrait, pour agrandir les surfaces grimposables. Les dix premières années, peut-être conquis par ma petite notoriété de l'époque, le propriétaire était très conciliant, il nous laissait transformer son bâtiment avec enthousiasme. Puis il a été pris d'un sursaut d'inquiétude et a commencé à nous embêter à coups de procès et d'avocats. Heureusement (ou malheureusement), le monsieur a décédé et nous avons pu, face à son héritier qui se désintéressait de la succession, faire une bonne affaire en achetant la maison.

CP: J'ai commencé l'escalade enfant, à l'âge de 11 ans, en 1989, par de l'escalade en top-rope sur mur artificiel. Au début des années 90, il y avait Bronx Rock à Hürth-Efferen (juste à côté de Cologne), c'était la première salle de notre région. Le top-rope était la norme au début et est devenu le standard dans l'ouest et le nord de l'Allemagne. Vous ne proposiez que du top-rope dans les premiers temps, n'est-ce pas ?

Isabelle: Oui, nous pratiquons uniquement le top-rope à Terres Neuves : avec la structure du bâtiment, la petite surface au sol et la grande fréquentation, il serait trop dangereux de proposer une escalade en tête. Nous manquons de place pour agrandir et proposer d'autres installations plus adaptées à l'évolution, comme le bloc et l'escalade en tête, donc nous nous concentrons sur le côté cosy, accueillant, joli, mais surtout sur la qualité des ouvertures de voies et leur renouvellement fréquent ! Des voies en « échelles », où on ap-

aren't necessary or particularly interesting, and aren't what climbing is really about. The technical aspect of movements and positioning, as well as "reading" and figuring out routes, are also qualities that all good climbers must develop.

CP: *You clearly should be seen as pioneers in the field. Are you proud of the movement you have started?*

Isabelle: Terres Neuves is without a doubt Belgium's most urban climbing gym, located as it is in the center of Brussels, between the Gare Centrale and Gare du Midi train stations, just a few streets from the Grand-Place and the famous Manneken Pis. It is easily accessible by bike or on public transport and regularly welcomes new and seasoned climbers from around the world, who are visiting Brussels for business or leisure, as tourists or students. We therefore meet many interesting people and speak almost every language there. Those traveling alone have no problems finding a climbing partner. In the more than 30 years we've been open, we've had a huge number of climbers from all walks of life through our doors, including some celebrities. In the late 1990s, former Van Halen front man David Lee Roth – a true showman and climber from California – came to the gym with his bodyguard for a private training session ahead of a big concert that evening, which he gave us VIP passes for. Looking back, I wish I'd kept a visitors' book from when we opened in 1987 as a memento of all the climbers we have welcomed from around the world!

CP: *The movement continues, with climbing gyms becoming more commonplace in urban areas and the sport featuring at the Olympic Games for the first time next year. As a former competitive climber, what do you make of these developments?*

Isabelle: My reaction is just "Finally!". We've been talking about it for what feels like an eternity... In the 1990s, I even took part in a pre-Olympic competition, with all the rigmarole of presenting the sport [to the IOC], only for the decision to be postponed. I competed for some ten years, taking part in World Cups, World and European Championships, masters, opens, but no Olympic Games... It's a shame. Maybe I'll get the chance in another life!

CP: *Let's look to the future. In 2027, your gym will have been open for 40 years. What do you think the Terres Neuves of 2027 will look like?*

Isabelle: For as long as passion takes precedence over money, Terres Neuves will be here: small, central, unpretentious and... popular!

prend juste la force ou l'endurance, ne nous semblent pas incontournables ni intéressantes et ne représentent pas fidèlement notre activité. Le côté technique des mouvements, des positions, ainsi que la lecture et le décodage des voies sont autant de qualités à développer pour devenir un bon grimpeur.

CP: *Vous méritez clairement le titre de pionniers du domaine. Êtes-vous fière du mouvement que vous avez lancé ?*

Isabelle: Par sa situation, Terres Neuves est certainement la plus citadine des salles d'escalade de Belgique : au centre de Bruxelles, entre la gare Centrale et celle du Midi, à quelques rues de la Grand-Place et du célèbre Manneken Pis, facilement accessible en vélo et en transports en commun, elle accueille régulièrement d'anciens et de nouveaux adeptes de multiples nationalités, à la capitale pour affaires, travail, tourisme, études, loisirs... On peut donc y faire des rencontres intéressantes et y parler presque toutes les langues. Et seul, on y trouve facilement un partenaire de cordée. Depuis plus de 30 ans, nous avons vu défiler un nombre incroyable de grimpeurs de tous horizons, voire même de grandes stars. Fin des années nonante, David Lee Roth, l'ex-chanteur de Van Halen, véritable show man et grimpeur de Californie, s'est fait une séance d'entraînement, assuré par son garde du corps dans la salle spécialement ouverte à son intention, avant son méga concert du soir pour lequel il nous a donné des passes VIP. Je regrette maintenant de n'avoir pas mis dès 87 un livre d'or à disposition de tous ces grimpeurs du monde pour mémoire !

CP: *L'ascension se poursuit : les salles d'escalade se généralisent dans les zones urbaines et l'an prochain, le sport sera présent pour la première fois aux Jeux olympiques. Que pensez-vous de ce développement, en tant qu'ancienne grimpeuse de compétition ?*

Isabelle: Je dirais « enfin ! ». Depuis le temps qu'on en parle... J'avais même participé dans les années 90 à une compétition pré-olympique avec tout le tralala des présentations ; ça avait été reporté. Compétitrice pendant une dizaine d'années, j'ai participé à quelques Coupes du monde, Championnats du monde, Européens, Masters, Opens... et donc pas de JO. Dommage. Dans une autre vie ?

CP: *Penchons-nous un peu sur l'avenir. Vous fêterez en 2027 les 40 ans de votre salle. À quoi ressemblera Terres Neuves en 2027 ?*

Isabelle: Tant que le côté passion primera sur le côté économique, Terres Neuves sera là : petite, centrale, discrète et... populaire !

ISABELLE DORSIMOND

Born: 1961

Lives in: Brussels

Background: Co-founder of Terres Neuves, the first climbing gym in Europe. Former competition climber and winner of the speed competition at the 1991 World Championships in Frankfurt.



REINI SCHERER

THE CHEF OF KI AND HIS RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

DER CHEFKOCH DES KI UND SEIN ERFOLGSREZEPT

TEXT & INTERVIEW: MARIA HILBER

INTERVIEW

◆ Born in East Tyrol, Austria, Reini Scherer grew up with climbing – and climbing grew up with him. He has a number of first ascents of both alpine and sport climbing routes to his name, including “Dschungelfieber” (8c+) on the Martinswand face. He coached the Austrian national team for many years, supporting talented young climbers, including David Lama, Angela Eiter, Anna Stöhr, Katharina Saurwein, Johanna Ernst, Jakob Schubert, and Jessica Pilz, on the road to becoming leading competitive climbers. Together with Rupert Messner, he was honoured as Austria’s trainer of the year in 2010. In 2001, he became the manager of the Tivoli climbing gym in Innsbruck and spent years campaigning for the construction of a larger facility. His efforts finally paid off, and when the KI (Innsbruck climbing center) eventually opened in May 2017, he became its managing director. Alongside all this, he has written a guide on steep skiing in Tyrol. Reini lives with his wife, Susanne, and their three children in Obsteig, not far from Innsbruck.

MH: From developer and first ascensionist of numerous rock climbing routes to route setter, coach, instructor and gym manager – you have many strings to your bow. What initially prompted you to pursue a career in climbing?

Reini: Well, I had to finance my studies myself and made a virtue out of necessity. Climbing was what I did best. People kept saying to me “You’re good at this... you’ve done that before... do you think you could

◆ Reini Scherer wurde in Osttirol geboren und ist mit dem Klettern groß geworden – und das Klettern mit ihm. Zahlreiche Erstbegehungen von alpinen und Sportkletterrouten gehen auf sein Konto, darunter „Dschungelfieber“ (8c+) an der Martinswand. Er begleitete jahrelang als Trainer der Nationalmannschaft junge Talente auf ihrem Weg an die Spitze des Wettkampfkletterns, darunter David Lama, Angela Eiter, Anna Stöhr, Katharina Saurwein, Johanna Ernst, Jakob Schubert, Jessica Pilz und viele andere mehr. Zusammen mit Rupert Messner wurde er 2010 als Österreichs Trainer des Jahres ausgezeichnet. Er leitete ab 2001 die Innsbrucker Kletterhalle Tivoli und setzte sich jahrelang für die Errichtung einer größeren Struktur ein. Im Mai 2017 wurde schließlich das KI (Kletterzentrum Innsbruck) eröffnet, wo er wiederum Geschäftsführer ist. Nebenbei hat er einen Führer fürs Steilwandfahren in Tirol geschrieben. Reini lebt mit seiner Frau Susanne und drei Kindern in Obsteig unweit von Innsbruck.

MH: Erschließer und Erstbegeher vieler Felsrouten, Routenbauer, Trainer, Ausbilder, Hallenmanager – du hast sehr viele verschiedene Rollen im Klettern. Was hat dich ursprünglich dazu bewegt, dich beruflich dem Klettern zu widmen?

Reini: Naja, ich musste mir mein Studium selbst finanzieren und habe aus der Not eine Tugend gemacht. Was ich am besten konnte, war eben klettern. Immer wieder haben mich Leute gefragt: „Du kannst das ja – du hast jenes schon gemacht – könntest du nicht?“ Mitte der Achtzi-

gerjahre hat es im Klettern noch gar keine wirklichen Jobs gegeben. Ich stamme aus der glücklichen Generation, die sozusagen ihre eigenen Jobs kreiert hat. Und so bin ich reingewachsen.

MH: What was the first way you found to make money from climbing?

Reini: During the summer holidays I sometimes worked as a postman, roofer, forestry worker, or at the lift. During the semester, I was teaching climbing courses at university or for the Austrian Alpine Association. Back then, instructors not only had to lead the courses, they had to get the infrastructure and route setting ready as well. It was nothing like today where climbing instructors just turn up and find set boulders ready and waiting for them.

MH: When you started climbing, did you ever imagine that the sport would become as professionalized as it is today?

Reini: I studied sport and Italian and was originally planning to train as a teacher. The only job profile that existed at that time was the “mountain guide”. There weren’t even real climbing crags. It wasn’t until the late 1980s that the first climbing competitions, artificial walls and climbing courses appeared. Only then did the sport climbing scene gain some momentum. At this time, there weren’t any route setter training courses in Europe. This changed in 1988 when the first training course was held in Paris – and I was invited to get involved.

MH: You managed Tivoli climbing gym from 2001, identified early on the need for a new gym in Innsbruck, and were heavily involved in the planning and construction of the new facility, which you’ve been managing since it opened in May 2017. The new Kletterzentrum Innsbruck (KI) climbing center is regarded as the ultimate state-of-the-art climbing gym. What aspects were most important to you during planning?

Reini: The top priority is envisaging all the qualities that you believe make up a good climbing gym. I spent months working on an invitation to tender and an operational concept. My goal was to create a structure that would not have to be closed for commercial operation because of a competition. I’ve been arranging various competitions for 32 years, so it was vital to ensure that the new center was suitable for hosting such events and all logistics under one roof. That led to a lot of questions: How does the customer get from the reception to the dressing rooms and where can they get water? How big do the storage and bistro have to be? Where is the transit zone for athletes and where does the jury sit? Where to put the connections for television broadcasts? In the end, I spent three months building a model of the winning project and planning the climbing walls into it.

MH: Was this the greatest challenge facing the architects as well?

Reini: I actually grew to love the architects! We had a great working relationship. Aesthetics are important to me, starting with the route setting and colour design of the walls

MH: Was war so ein erster Job, mit dem du Geld verdienst hast?

Reini: In den Sommerferien habe ich mitunter als Briefträger, Dachdecker, Forstarbeiter oder beim Lift gearbeitet. Während dem Semester waren es dann Kletterkurse an der Uni oder für den Alpenverein. Damals war es auch so, dass derjenige, der die Kurse gehalten hat, zunächst einmal die Struktur, sprich den Routenbau, selbst herrichten musste. Das war nicht so wie heute, wo der Kletterlehrer die Boulder für den Kurs schon fix und fertig hergerichtet vorfindet.

MH: Als du angefangen hast zu klettern, hättest du dir damals einen Professionalisierungsgrad, wie wir ihn heute sehen, vorstellen können?

Reini: Ich habe Sport und Italienisch studiert und hatte vor, danach Lehrer zu werden. Das einzige Berufsbild, das es damals gab, war der „Bergführer“. Es gab ja nicht mal richtige Klettergärten. Erst Ende der Achtzigerjahre kamen die ersten Kletterbewerbe, Kunstwände und Kletterkurse auf. Erst dann kam etwas Schwung in die Sportkletterszene. Es gab ja bis zu dieser Zeit auch keine offizielle Routensetzer Ausbildung in Europa. 1988 gab es in Paris dann die erste Ausbildung und ich wurde gebeten, dort mitzuarbeiten.

MH: Du hast seit 2001 das Tivoli geleitet, bereits früh den Bedarf für eine neue Halle in Innsbruck erkannt und warst schließlich maßgeblich an der Planung und Realisierung des neuen Kletterzentrums beteiligt, wo du seit der Eröffnung im Mai 2017 wiederum Geschäftsführer bist. Das KI gilt in vielerlei Hinsicht als die State of the Art Kletterhalle schlechthin. Welche Aspekte waren für dich die wichtigsten bei der Planung?

Reini: Das Wichtigste ist zuallererst, dass du eine Vorstellung davon hast, wie für dich eine Halle sein sollte. Dafür habe ich in monatelanger Arbeit eine Ausschreibung und ein Betriebskonzept verfasst. Mein Ziel war es eine Struktur zu schaffen, die nicht wegen eines Wettbewerbs für den kommerziellen Betrieb geschlossen werden muss. Ich organisiere seit 32 Jahren verschiedene Arten von Wettkämpfen, deshalb war für mich essentiell, eine geeignete Struktur dafür zu schaffen und die gesamte Logistik unter ein Dach zu bekommen. Und da tauchen viele Fragen auf: Wie kommt der Kunde vom Empfang in die Garderoben und wo kann er sich Wasser holen? Wie groß muss das Lager und das Bistro sein? Wo ist die Transitzone für Athleten und wo sitzt die Jury? Wohin mit den Anschlüssen für Fernsehübertragungen? Schließlich habe ich drei Monate damit verbracht, ein Modell vom Siegerprojekt zu bauen

und die Kletterwände dort hineinzuplanen.

MH: War das die große Herausforderung an die Architektur?

Reini: Also, ich hab die Architekten ja lieben gelernt, das war echt eine lässige Zusammenarbeit! Die Optik ist mir

“THE TOP PRIORITY IS ENVISAGING ALL THE QUALITIES THAT YOU BELIEVE MAKE UP A GOOD CLIMBING GYM.”

„DAS WICHTIGSTE IST ZUALLERERST, DASS DU EINE VORSTELLUNG DAVON HAST, WIE FÜR DICH EINE HALLE SEIN SOLLTE“



and extending across the entire gym. The architecture and sense of space needed to be perfect. I wanted to create lots of transparency and an open feel, true to the motto "less is more". Given its size, it might sound a bit arrogant for me to say this about our gym, but we could have squeezed in even more towers. But there comes a point where you have to say enough is enough! You have to work with the space you have and try to turn your plans into a reality with care and logistical know-how.

MH: How long did it take to plan the climbing center?

Reini: I knew we needed this gym ten years before it was completed. I knew what a modern climbing gym needed to provide and what it should look like. I spread the message far and wide. It took ages for everyone to get on the same page politically and for work to begin. After receiving final approval that the gym could be built here, the planning and construction work took around two years.

MH: What made you so certain that there was a demand for a facility of this size?

Reini: I must admit that even I felt some trepidation when I realized, during construction how large it would be. But we knew that we didn't just want to construct a simple climbing gym, but a gym with an integrated training center for the Austrian national team. This meant that we would require areas for professional climbing training and for holding competitions, both of which demand a great deal of space. In retrospect, we could have made the gym even bigger! Because one thing has proven to be true: when large towns, cities, or associations build a gym, they should aim for large structures that are done properly, instead of sprinkling around lots of little church towers. Sooner or later, smaller gyms will encounter a whole range of problems.

wichtig, das fängt für mich beim Routenbau und der Farbgestaltung der Kletterwände an, muss aber natürlich in der gesamten Halle stimmen. Die Architektur und das Raumgefühl mussten einfach passen. Ich wollte zum Beispiel immer viel Transparenz und Offenheit haben, nach dem Motto „weniger ist mehr“. Was bei dieser Halle hier vielleicht ein wenig arrogant rüberkommen kann, aber auch hier hätte man noch mehr Türme reinstopfen können. Nur, das passt dann nicht mehr! Du musst mit dem Raum arbeiten, der dir zur Verfügung steht und das, was du haben möchtest, mit Gefühl und logistischem Know-how dort umsetzen.

MH: Wie lange dauerte die Planungszeit für das Kletterzentrum?

Reini: Bereits zehn Jahre vor der Fertigstellung habe ich gewusst: Es braucht diese Halle. Ich wusste, was eine moderne Halle können muss und wie sie ausschauen sollte. Mit dieser Idee bin ich hausieren gegangen. Es hat ewig gedauert, auf politischer Ebene alle auf einen Nenner zu bringen, sodass es an die Umsetzung gehen konnte. Ab dem Zeitpunkt der endgültigen Entscheidung, dass die Halle hier gebaut wird, haben Planung und Bau noch ungefähr zwei Jahre gedauert.

MH: Warum warst du dir damals schon so sicher, dass es einen Bedarf für eine Anlage in dieser Größenordnung geben würde?

Reini: Mir ist in der Bauphase selber ein bisschen der Reis gegangen (Öst. für: Angst bekommen) als mir klar wurde, wie groß das Ganze wird. Aber wir wollten nicht nur eine Kletterhalle bauen, sondern eine Halle mit einem integrierten Bundesleistungszentrum. Das bedeutete, dass wir Platz für exklusive Trainingsmöglichkeiten der Teams und und für die Austragung von Wettbewerben brauchen würden. Allein dafür ist eine gewisse Größe notwendig. Im Nachhinein betrachtet hätte man die Halle ja noch größer machen können. Denn eines hat sich herausgestellt: Wenn große Städte oder Verbände eine Halle bauen, dann muss die Devise sein: Baut sie groß und gscheit, anstatt viele kleine Kirchtürme hinzustellen. Die kleineren Hallen werden früher oder später alle Probleme bekommen.

MH: Will the KI eventually become too small?

Reini: At certain peak times, it's already too small. You can compare it to a ski resort, where the slopes are always overcrowded during peak seasons, when most of the revenue is generated. When the weather is bad in summer, people flock here from all over to go climbing, even from as far away as Lake Garda, and we're extremely busy. Our size impresses people so much that it alone acts as a magnet.

MH: Apart from its size, what makes the KI stand out from other climbing gyms?

Reini: Only our customers can provide a proper answer to that question. We simply strive to do our best and to offer good quality in all regards, whether in the bistro, in our courses or in route setting. We reset routes every Monday and boulders every Wednesday. Other gyms would organize a boulder jam session if they had 30 new boulders, but here we get that every Wednesday.

MH: How did you acquire the knowledge to manage a gym of this size? How much can be attributed to your time at Tivoli and how else did you gain the necessary experience?

Reini: You don't necessarily need to have studied business or management to run a company. It's enough to know where your own strengths and weaknesses lie and who to consult for advice. I sat the Austrian entrepreneurial examination for my own interest. However, I believe that the most important skill managers need is the ability to think rationally, emotionally, and sensibly at the same time. There are lots of examples of successful entrepreneurs who didn't go to business school, including René Benko, who, by the way, was a good climber once and who I even trained for European Cups. As a manager, you also need a head for figures, but essentially, the most important quality is a feel for your business, your team and your customers. I can, of course, draw on the 17 years I spent at Tivoli. And I've been involved in the industry since the very first climbing gyms were built. I may well do a lot of things wrong without even knowing it. But, be that as it may, everything's worked out pretty nicely so far. I keep a record of figures that seem important and analyze them. I try to control what we do wherever possible, I work closely with my team, and allow all of us to make decisions together.

MH: What are the greatest challenges you have faced since the KI opened two and a half years ago?

Reini: The biggest challenge was dealing with the unexpected rush of customers. I had anticipated around half as many visitors. It quickly became apparent that we required a bigger workforce. The more visitors you have, the more you must take care of them. And I needed a lot more staff to help with this! I calculated that we would break even when we reached around 120,000 visitors. But I had done the reckon-

MH: Wird das KI irgendwann zu klein sein?

Reini: Zu bestimmten Stoßzeiten ist es schon zu klein. Ähnlich wie in einem Skigebiet werden in den Ferienzeiten die größten Umsätze generiert, und dann werden die Pisten immer überfüllt sein. Wenn im Sommer schlechtes Wetter ist, dann kommen die Leute von überallher um klettern zu können, sogar vom Gardasee. Dann ist hier extrem viel los. Die Größe beeindruckt dermaßen, dass die Halle allein deshalb zum Magnet wird.

MH: Was unterscheidet das KI von anderen Kletterhallen, abgesehen von der Größe?

Reini: Wenn man die Frage ehrlich beantworten will, dann muss man den Kunden fragen und nicht mich. Wir versuchen einfach unser Bestes zu geben und gute Qualität in allen Bereichen zu bieten, egal ob im Bistro, bei den Kursen oder beim Routenbau. Wir bauen jeden Montag Routen, wir bauen jeden Mittwoch Boulder. Mit 30 neuen Bouldern würden andere eine Boulderjam-Session veranstalten, bei uns gibt's das jeden Mittwoch.

MH: Wie hast du dir das Wissen für das Management einer Halle in dieser Größenordnung angeeignet? Wie viel stammt aus deiner bisherigen Erfahrung im Tivoli, welche anderen Quellen standen dir zur Verfügung?

Reini: Um ein Geschäft leiten zu können, muss man nicht unbedingt Wirtschaft oder Management studiert haben. Es reicht mitunter auch zu wissen, wo die eigenen Schwächen und Stärken liegen und wen man sich als Berater ins Team holt. Ich habe aus Eigeninteresse die „Unternehmerprüfung“ nachgeholt. Aber ich finde, dass man vor allem mit Kopf, Gefühl und Verstand han-

deln muss. Es gibt viele Beispiele für erfolgreiche Unternehmer, die nicht studiert haben – zum Beispiel René Benko, der übrigens mal ein super Kletterer war und den ich sogar für Europacups trainiert habe. Als Manager muss man vor allem vorausdenken und rechnen können. Aber im Grunde genommen braucht es vor allem ein Gefühl für das Unternehmen, seine Mitarbeiter und die Kunden. Ich habe sicher den Vorteil, dass ich 17 Jahre lang im Tivoli Erfahrungen sammeln konnte. Und ich war von Anfang an dabei, als die ersten Kletterhallen entstanden sind. Vielleicht mache ich auch vieles falsch, das weiß ich nicht. Bis jetzt funktioniert es jedenfalls gut. Ich halte für mich Zahlen fest, die mir wichtig erscheinen und analysiere sie. Ich versuche zu steuern, wo es möglich ist. Und ich beziehe mein Team mit ein und lasse alle mitentscheiden.

MH: Was hast du in den zweieinhalb Jahren seit Eröffnung als die größten Herausforderungen empfunden?

Reini: Die größte Herausforderung war es, mit dem unerwarteten Ansturm umzugehen. Ich hatte mit der Hälfte der Eintritte gerechnet. Aber wir haben schnell gemerkt, dass es so nicht funktionieren konnte.

“WHEN LARGE TOWNS, CITIES, OR ASSOCIATIONS BUILD A GYM, THEY SHOULD AIM FOR LARGE STRUCTURES THAT ARE DONE PROPERLY, INSTEAD OF SPRINKLING AROUND LOTS OF LITTLE CHURCH TOWERS.”

„WENN GROSSE STÄDTE ODER VERBÄNDE EINE HALLE BAUEN, DANN MUSS DIE DEVISE SEIN: BAUT SIE GROSS UND GSCHIEIT, ANSTATT VIELE KLEINE KIRCHTÜRME HINZUSTELLEN.“

ing without the big rush. The cleaning costs alone rocketed, we needed a lot more route setting, more holds, more receptionists, an HR manager. We've since grown into a company with 45 staff members, a bit like a hotel. And when you add the climbing association and external companies into the mix, then you're looking at 60 jobs.

MH: How would you describe your everyday working life? What are your main duties and how much of a routine do you have?

Reini: After the first two years of operation, I'm slowly getting into some sort of routine. During the first 18 months, I had to be here, there, and everywhere in order to keep everything under control. I like to treat the business like a hotel or restaurant. Especially in route setting or dealing with customers and employees, like a good chef, I try to work in the kitchen myself while simultaneously taking care of the guests and staff. That's my philosophy. And like a restaurant owner, I also sometimes chip in by laying the table, chatting to the guests, inviting them for a drink, and collecting the garbage. The customer has to feel that the boss is present.

And the quality of our offer must be the core value of the gym. That's why every Monday and Wednesday we set new routes. These are two key days in my working week. Then on Tuesday and Thursday, I concentrate on managerial and administrative tasks. I keep Fridays flexible so I can focus on whatever needs doing.

"LIKE A GOOD CHEF, I TRY TO WORK IN THE KITCHEN MYSELF WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY TAKING CARE OF THE GUESTS AND STAFF."

„ICH VERSUCHE, SO WIE EIN GUTER KOCH SELBST IN DER KÜCHE ZU STEHEN UND MICH GLEICHZEITIG AUCH UM DIE GÄSTE UND DAS PERSONAL ZU KÜMMERN.“

Je mehr Besucher, desto mehr musst du dich um sie kümmern, und so habe ich sehr viel mehr Personal gebraucht. Ich hatte berechnet, dass ich mit ca. 120.000 Besuchern den Break Even erreichen würde. Aber ich hatte die Rechnung ohne den großen Ansturm gemacht. Allein die Putzkosten sind extrem angestiegen, es brauchte viel mehr Routenbau, mehr Griffe, mehr Personal im Empfangsbereich, einen eigenen Personalmanager. Mittlerweile sind wir ein Unternehmen mit 45 Angestellten, ähnlich einem Hotelbetrieb. Den Kletterverband und externe Firmen dazugerechnet, reden wir hier von 60 Jobs.

MH: Wie kann man sich deinen Arbeitsalltag vorstellen? Was gehört zu deinen Hauptaufgaben und wie viel davon ist Routine?

Reini: Nach zwei Jahren Betrieb kommt so langsam kommt etwas Routine rein. In den ersten anderthalb Jahren bin ich viel rotiert, um alles unter Kontrolle zu haben. Ich betrachte das Ganze ja wie ein Hotel oder einen Gastronomiebetrieb. Gerade beim Routenbau oder im Umgang mit Kunden und Mitarbeitern versuche ich, so wie ein guter Koch selbst in der Küche zu stehen und mich gleichzeitig auch um die Gäste und das Personal zu kümmern. Das ist meine Philosophie. Wie ein Gastronom decke ich auch mal selber den Tisch, rede mit den Gästen, lade sie auf ein Getränk ein oder klaube den Müll zusammen. Der Kunde muss spüren, dass der Chef präsent ist.

Das Herzstück der Halle muss die Qualität unseres Angebot sein. Deswegen bin ich jeden Montag und jeden Mittwoch beim Routenbau mit im Team, das sind zwei Kerntage. Dienstags und donnerstags mache ich dann nur Management- und Büroarbeit. Den Freitag teile ich mir flexibel ein, je nachdem, was gerade ansteht.



Photo: Alpenverein - Norbert Freudenthaler.com

MH: Do you take the weekends off?

Reini: Yes, as often as possible. Unless I need to be here because of an event or competition, which is often the case, of course. We hold 14 competitions a year, mostly on the weekend. That also means a lot of voluntary work for the Alpine Club and association.

MH: Who is on your route setting team?

Reini: We work with a set team of both permanently employed and guest route setters who belong to the fixed team. Most of them are association coaches or international route setters who live in Innsbruck and come here regularly to climb. They are well acquainted with the working regulations and our requirements in terms of easy and difficult routes and boulders. I place immense value on ensuring that even easy routes demand some technical skills.

Working with guest route setters you don't know is extremely difficult and laborious from both a legal and organizational standpoint. In most cases, they don't have their own tools, and it takes a long time for them to get their bearings and be ready to start work. Our regular route setters, in contrast, come in and are good to go within five minutes.

I can set two routes myself in the time it takes me to explain everything to a new guest route setter. And I never ask external or competition route setters to work on easy routes because they mostly turn out to be a complete flop. Most of the time they are hardly technically demanding routes or have some very difficult sections.

"THEY WILL FIND NEW ROUTES EVERY MONDAY AND NEW BOULDERS EVERY WEDNESDAY."

„JEDEN MONTAG GIBT ES NEUE ROUTEN UND JEDEN MITTWOCH NEUE BOULDER.“

MH: Is there a routine you follow when route setting?

Reini: Between 5 and 6am, Engelbert and Mario begin dismantling the routes. Around seven or half past, Georg, the head setter, joins in, takes a look at the existing range of holds, and roughly determines which routes to set in which sector. At this time, all the ropes for route setting are already hanging on the walls as required. While Engelbert and Mario are already starting to wash the dismantled holds, a guest route setter and I join in and together we finalise the plan for the new routes. We get going at eight o'clock at the latest. It takes us until around 4pm to set all the routes. After that, we all spend an hour testing each route before the area is reopened at 5pm. Any customers who visit us in the evening are oblivious to all this work. But what they do know is that they will find new routes every Monday and new boulders every Wednesday.

MH: How big are the areas that you reset each time?

Reini: We have 2.5 routes per line in the lead area and dismantle six to nine lines per week. In the bouldering area, it's usually 25 to 30 boulder problems each week. At the same time, the climbing association also resets the walls in the exclusive training areas.

MH: Samstag und Sonntag nimmst du dir frei?

Reini: Ja, so weit wie möglich, es sei denn ich bin wegen einer Veranstaltung oder einem Bewerb hier. Das kommt natürlich auch regelmäßig vor, denn wir haben 14 Wettbewerbe im Jahr und die meisten finden am Wochenende statt. Da fällt zusätzlich auch viel ehrenamtliche Tätigkeit für den Verein und den Verband an.

MH: Wie setzt sich das Routenbauteam zusammen?

Reini: Wir arbeiten mit festangestellte Routenbauern und mit Gast-schraubern, die aber zum fixen Team gehören. Meistens sind das Trainer vom Verband oder internationale Routenbauer, die in Innsbruck leben und somit auch selbst regelmäßig in der Halle klettern. Sie wissen über die Arbeitsregeln Bescheid und sie kennen unseren

Anspruch an leichte und schwere Routen und Boulder. Zum Beispiel ist es mir extrem wichtig, dass auch leichte Routen einen technischen Anspruch haben.

Mit Gastschraubern, die man nicht kennt, zu arbeiten ist sehr, sehr schwierig und mühsam, sowohl in gesetzlicher als auch in organisatorischer Hinsicht. Meistens haben

sie kein eigenes Werkzeug dabei und müssen sich umständlich organisieren, bis sie sich zurechtfinden und mit der eigentlichen Arbeit beginnen können. Unsere routinierten Routenbauer kommen rein und sind in fünf Minuten startklar.

In der Zeit, in der ich einem neuen Gastschrauber erkläre, wie gearbeitet werden soll, baue ich selber zwei Routen. Und die leichten Routen lasse ich eigentlich nie von Externen oder von Wettkampfroutenbauern bauen, weil das fast immer in die Hose geht. Das werden meistens technisch wenig anspruchsvolle Routen oder Routen mit schweren Einzelstellen.

MH: Gibt es einen festgelegten Ablauf beim Routenbau?

Reini: Zwischen fünf und sechs Uhr in der Früh beginnen Engelbert und Mario mit dem Abbau der Routen. Gegen sieben oder halb acht kommt Georg, der Bereichsleiter für den Routenbau, dazu, schaut sich das vorhandene Griffangebot an und bestimmt grob, welche Routen in welchem Sektor gebaut werden. Zu dieser Zeit hängen bereits alle Seile für den Routenbau vorschriftsmäßig an den Wänden. Während Engelbert und Mario bereits mit dem Waschen der abgebauten Griffe beginnen, stoßen ein Gastroutenbauer und ich dazu und wir finalisieren gemeinsam den Plan der neuen Routen. Spätestens um acht Uhr geht's los. Wir bauen dann bis um vier Uhr am Nachmittag. Anschließend werden alle Routen innerhalb von einer Stunde von allen durchgetestet und um fünf wird der Bereich wieder fürs Klettern geöffnet. Wer am Abend kommt, bekommt vom Umbau selber gar nichts mit. Aber die Kunden wissen, jeden Montag gibt es neue Routen und jeden Mittwoch neue Boulder.

MH: Wie groß sind die Bereiche, die jeweils umgebaut werden?

Reini: Wir haben im Leadbereich pro Linie 2,5 Routen und bauen sechs bis neun Linien ab. Im Boulderbereich sind es meist 25 bis 30 Boulder

MH: On average, how long does each route and boulder remain on the wall?

Reini: In our bouldering area, all the boulders are reset at least every two months. We have so many visitors that after just two or three days, the holds look as if they have been on the wall for three or four weeks. For the lead area, this question has to be considered somewhat differently: the fewer routes you have, the more often you have to change them. It's therefore impossible to generalize how often gyms should renew routes. In our indoor area, we try to reset the routes every eight months, outdoors only once a year, due to the lower frequency. We have almost 600 routes, and if we change them too often, many customers don't even manage to climb their projects anymore. Some areas are renewed at shorter intervals, such as the extremely popular autobelay lines and the competition and training areas. Last year, we had almost 250,000 entrances, and our visitors are actually very satisfied. Of course, there are also customers who never go to other gyms or to the rock, who always climb in certain gym areas on routes of a certain grade. For them, there's never enough resetting.

MH: How long did it take for these systems to become established?

Reini: We established this system within three or four months of opening. It works perfectly in terms of time management, and our customers are not constantly disturbed by noise, worksites, and lifts. We virtually always set routes from the rope and only work with platforms in the steepest of sections. When we do this, we keep the platform set up against the wall for three or four days before dismantling the worksite.

MH: How do you test and grade your routes and boulders? What guidelines do you have for this at the KI?

Reini: We do this ourselves; each route is climbed by at least two route setters. I'm always involved. At first, we apply temporary stickers with a grade and ask regular customers for their opinion. After a few days, the confirmed grade will be officially written. With our boulders, we use the color of the holds to indicate the grade. Route setting by color requires a lot of practice and self-discipline. Every time we set boulders, we create four problems in each color. Each of them must have their own distinct character. For example, we need one with a new-style element and one for old-school climbers, and so on. There has to be a broad variation of holds for this. It's a huge challenge. When testing, there are often discussions and corrections, because the color concept and the grades have to match. A super beautiful boulder sometimes needs to be made a bit easier or more difficult. But that's the way it is – it's not so much about expressing your own creativity, but about creating the best possible offer for the customer. Our regular route setters get to know the customers and their requirements themselves. With guest route setters, on the other hand, it can happen that problematic routes or problems are not fixed. But for anyone employed here, it would be thoroughly embarrassing if a customer came up to them to say there was an issue with one of their routes.

"I EXPECT EVERY CLIMBER TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING THREE SKILLS: STRENGTH, TECHNIQUE, AND BRAINS"

„ICH FORDERE GENAU DIESE DREI FÄHIGKEITEN VON EINEM KLETTERER: KRAFT, TECHNIK UND KOPF.“

pro wöchentlichem Umbau. Parallel dazu schraubt auch der Kletterverband immer wieder seine Wände in den exklusiven Trainingsbereichen um.

MH: Wie lange bleiben die Routen und Boulder durchschnittlich an der Wand?

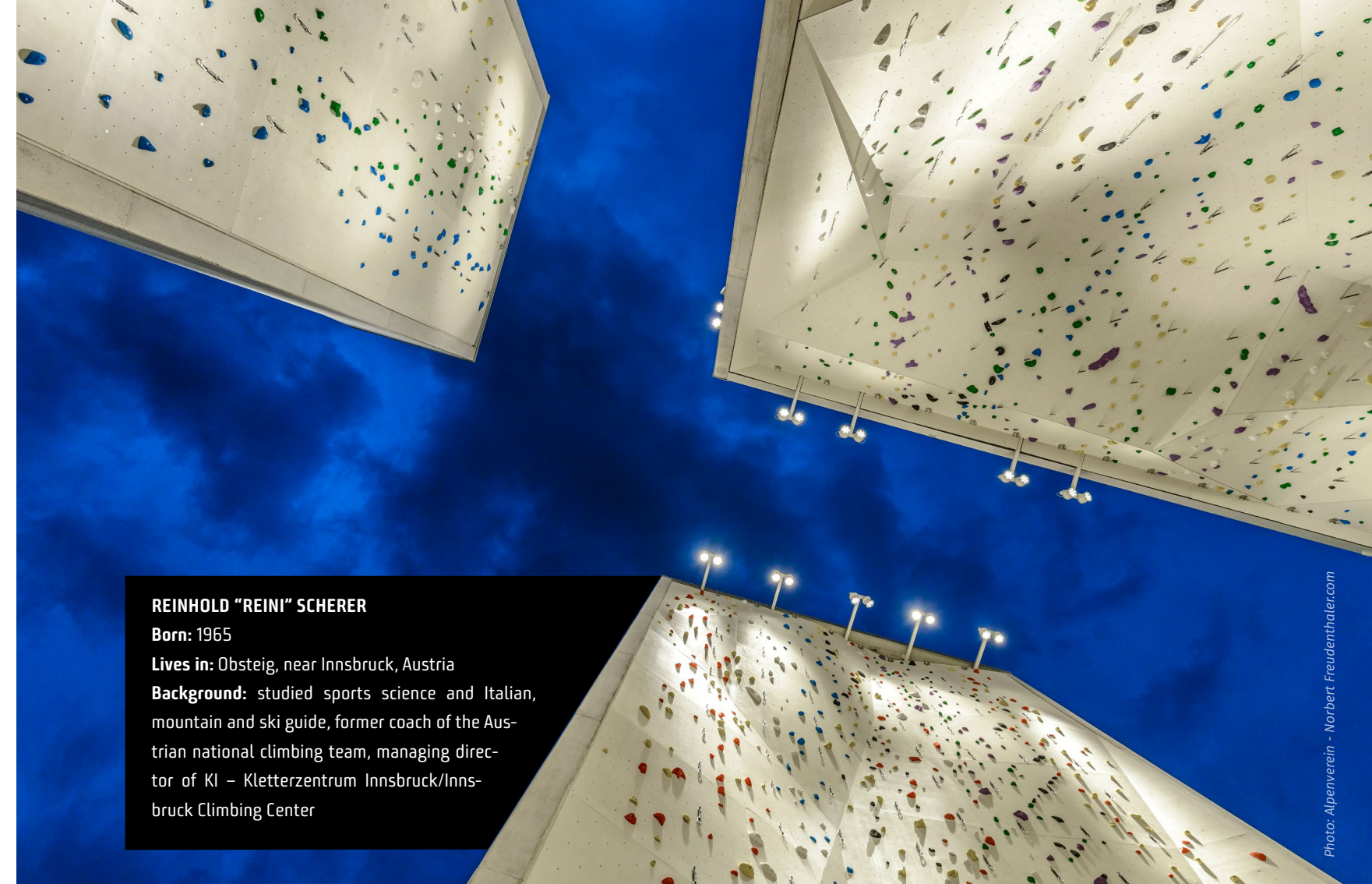
Reini: Im Boulderbereich sind spätestens alle zwei Monate alle Boulder neu. Wir haben eine so hohe Frequenz, dass die Griffe nach zwei, drei Tagen schon so aussehen, als wären sie bereits drei oder vier Wochen an der Wand. Im Leadbereich ist diese Frage etwas anders zu betrachten: Je weniger Routen du hast, umso öfter musst du umschrauben. Es lässt sich also nicht verallgemeinern, wie oft Hallen Routen erneuern sollten. Indoor versuchen wir die Routen alle acht Monate neu zu schrauben, outdoor durch die geringere Frequenz derzeit nur einmal pro Jahr. Wir haben knapp 600 Routen und wenn wir zu oft umschrauben, schaffen es viele Kunden gar nicht mehr, ihre Projekte zu klettern. Einige Bereiche werden aber auch in kürzeren Zeitabständen erneuert, zum Beispiel die stark besuchten Toppas-Bereiche oder die Wettkampf- bzw. Trainingsbereiche. Letztes Jahr hatten wir knapp 250.000 Eintritte und unserer Besucher sind eigentlich durchwegs zufrieden. Natürlich gibt es aber auch Kunden, die weder in andere Hallen noch an den Fels gehen, und auch bei uns immer in denselben Bereichen und dort nur einen bestimmten Grad klettern. Für diese Kletterer wird trotz allem immer zu wenig umgeschraubt.

MH: Wie lange hat es gedauert, bis sich diese Abläufe etabliert haben?

Reini: Dieses System haben wir innerhalb von drei, vier Monaten definiert. Vom Zeitmanagement her ist es so ideal und die Leute werden nicht ständig mit Lärm, Baustellen und herumstehenden Steigern belästigt. Wir schrauben eigentlich immer aus dem Seil, nur im steilsten Bereich wird mit Steiger gearbeitet. Dort funktioniert es so, dass der Steiger für drei, vier Tage an der Wand ist und anschließend die Baustelle wieder verschwindet.

MH: Wie steht es mit dem Testen und Bewerten der Routen und Boulder? Welche Vorgaben gibt es dafür im KI?

Reini: Wir Routenbauer machen das selber und zwar so, dass jede Route von mindestens zwei Personen geklettert wird. Auch ich bin immer dabei. Zuerst bringen wir provisorische Aufkleber mit dem Grad an und fragen Stammkunden um ihre Meinung. Nach einigen Tagen wird der bestätigte Grad dann offiziell angeschrieben. Beim Bouldern ist bei uns der Grad über die Grifffarben definiert. Nach Farben schrauben erfordert viel Routine und Selbstdisziplin. Es werden je vier Probleme von jeder Farbe geschraubt, jeder davon sollte unterschiedlichen Charakter haben. Zum Beispiel braucht es einen mit einem New-Style-Element, einen für die Old-school-Kletterer, und so weiter. Und dafür ist natürlich die entsprechende Variation an Griffen notwendig. Das alles ist eine große Herausforderung. Beim Testen kommt es immer wieder zu Diskussionen und Ausbesserungen, weil das



REINHOLD "REINI" SCHERER

Born: 1965

Lives in: Obsteig, near Innsbruck, Austria

Background: studied sports science and Italian, mountain and ski guide, former coach of the Austrian national climbing team, managing director of KI – Kletterzentrum Innsbruck/Innsbruck Climbing Center

MH: To what extent should route setting be customer-oriented? Or is it the other way around?

Reini: It's a bit of both. You need a few routes that will keep your customers happy. At the same time, it's also important that you stay true to yourself and do things your own way – a bit like a hotel or restaurant. You present your menu, your quality and your style. This, too, creates happy customers. If you want to focus exclusively on your customers and make money, open a sausage stand and you'll soon be laughing all the way to the bank. If that's your business model, then by all means set basic routes for novices. I'm sure there are some fitness enthusiasts who would be willing to spend money on that. Or you could say hey, we're a climbing gym, anyone who wants to climb here needs to have at least some climbing skills, even on easy routes. That's my philosophy and I want to stay true to it. And I'm going to stick to my guns for as long as I can keep my business financially viable. I don't want my gym to be degraded to a substitute fitness studio.

MH: You said that you like to talk directly to your customers. Is customer feedback important to you and do you consciously seek it out? How do you obtain feedback and what do you do with it?

Reini: We're always asking our regular customers what they think and we sometimes ask our new customers for their thoughts as well. We receive a wide range of feedback. Some people travel quite a distance to reach us, because they like the fact that our routes require a good technique and strong climbing skills. On the flipside, other customers say "what a load of rubbish. I can't manage anything here. It's much

Farbkonzept und die Grade aufeinander abgestimmt sein müssen. Ein super schöner Boulder muss dann manchmal etwas entschärft oder schwieriger gemacht werden. Aber so ist es eben – es zählt nicht so sehr die eigene Kreation, sondern das Angebot für den Kunden. Routenbauer, die häufig vor Ort sind, lernen die Kunden und deren Ansprüche selbst kennen. Mit externen Routenbauern kann es hingegen passieren, dass problematische Routen oder Boulder nicht ausbessert werden. Aber wer hier angestellt ist, dem wäre es absolut peinlich, von den Kunden auf mögliche Probleme in seiner Route angesprochen zu werden.

MH: Inwieweit sollte sich der Routenbau am Kunden orientieren? Oder ist es eher umgekehrt?

Reini: Es braucht beides ein bisschen. Du brauchst ein paar Routen, mit denen du den Kunden zufriedenstellst. Und dann ist es wichtig, dass du ähnlich wie ein Hotel oder Restaurant deine eigene Linie fährst und dein Menü, deine Qualität bzw. deinen Stil präsentierst. Auch das taugt den Leuten. Wenn du dich nur am Kunden orientierst und Geld machen willst, dann mach eine Würstelbude auf, du kannst viel Kohle damit verdienen. Wenn das dein Geschäftsmodell ist, dann bau einfach nur Stiefteltouren an die Wände. Es finden sich bestimmt Fitness-orientierte Sportler, die bereit sind für dieses Angebot Geld auszugeben. Oder aber du sagst: Nein, ich bin eine Kletterhalle, bei mir musst du auch in leichten Routen klettern können. Das ist eher meine Philosophie und ich möchte ihr treu bleiben. Solange ich es finanziell vertreten kann, will ich diesen Grundsatz nicht aufgeben. Ich will mich nicht zu einer Fitnessstudio-Ersatzhalle degradieren lassen.

easier in other gyms." Lots of climbers find my routes technically difficult, but I expect every climber to have the following three skills: strength, technique, and brains.

Responding to criticism is never easy, and grading routes in a way that keeps everyone happy is just as difficult. A strong guy might be out of his depth when faced with technical routes that a skilled, young female climber might find easy. It's all about striking the right balance.

"I DON'T WANT MY GYM TO BE DEGRADED TO A SUBSTITUTE FITNESS STUDIO."

„ICH WILL MICH NICHT ZU EINER FITNESSSTUDIO-ERSATZHALLE DEGRADIEREN LASSEN.“

MH: The KI welcomes both recreational and professional climbers. What are the benefits and challenges of having this mix of target groups?

Reini: There are both advantages and disadvantages. Having the professionals here is great advertising for us. A downside is that they often don't know how to conduct themselves. There are times when I want to throw out the youth national teams. They act as if they were in their own living rooms. They take up the most space, create the most mess, and don't stick to any of the rules. And they're also the ones who complain about the prices and ask for discounts. Really, these groups should be asked to pay double, because they occupy entire wall areas, and the holds and route setting for them cost more.

This morning, for example, I had to ask the Russian youth team's coach to come and see me so I could explain our rules to her again. She herself stood about eight metres away from the wall while belaying. Her reaction: "But I'm the coach of the national team!" What are you supposed to reply to that? And sometimes even the coaches find it difficult to keep the young athletes under control.

Despite all this, we have a mutually beneficial relationship. Although they're often raucous, I can't imagine life without the training teams, because they're also a lot of fun. After all, there is still a lot of educational work to be done.

MH: From young and old to beginners and experienced climbers, recreational climbers can also be divided into several target groups. Climbing means something different to each and every person who walks through your doors. Do you feel that one of the roles of a gym is to instill certain values in its customers?

Reini: There are times when I do feel responsible for this, and times when I don't. But then I think to myself that I want to create an atmosphere in which everyone gets on well together, which is why I sometimes find myself being forced to explain to people that they need to stop behaving in a certain way so that it might be less dangerous. I think every gym operator would agree with me when I say that establishing a certain gym culture or a culture where everyone acts as they should is extremely laborious.

In fitness studios, it's a given that you don't train in bare feet or topless. Here, climbers walk into our restaurant without any shoes on and sit down next to diners, dripping in sweat, topless, and with smelly feet. That's just not okay! And then all I hear is: "But that's what I do

MH: Du hast erwähnt, dass du dich gerne direkt mit den Kunden unterhältst. Ist dir das Feedback der Kunden wichtig bzw. suchst du es bewusst? Wie kommt ihr zu Feedback und wie geht ihr damit um?

Reini: Wir fragen sehr oft unsere Stammkunden und ab und zu auch neue Kunden, was sie so denken. Wir bekommen ganz unterschiedliches Feedback. Es kommen Leute von weit her, weil sie es mögen, dass unsere Routen Technik und Kletterkönnen erfordern. Auf der anderen Seite gibt es auch Kunden, die sagen: „So ein Sch****, bei euch komme ich nirgends rauf. In anderen Hallen ist alles viel leichter.“ Auch meine Routen finden viele Leute technisch schwierig, aber ich fordere genau diese drei Fähigkeiten von einem Kletterer: Kraft, Technik und Kopf. Es ist immer schwierig mit Kritik umzugehen, und eine für alle zufriedenstellende Bewertung ist genauso schwierig. Ein kräftiger Typ kann mit technischen Routen überfordert sein, die aber wiederum einem technisch begabten Mädchen leicht fallen. Die Wahrheit liegt irgendwo in der Mitte.

MH: Breitensport und Spitzensport – im KI ist Platz für beides. Welche Vorteile und Herausforderungen ergeben sich aus diesem Mix der Zielgruppen?

Reini: Es gibt Vorteile und Nachteile. Wenn die Spitzensportler da sind, ist das natürlich auch gute Werbung für uns. Ein Nachteil ist, dass sie oft nicht wissen, wie sie sich zu benehmen haben. Speziell die Jugendnationalteams würde ich am liebsten manchmal rausschmeißen. Die führen sich auf wie im eigenen Wohnzimmer. Sie brauchen am meisten Platz, machen den meisten Dreck, halten sich an keine Regeln. Und genau die beschwerten sich dann noch über „Verbotsschilder“, über Preise und hätten gerne Vergünstigungen. Eigentlich müsste man von solchen Gruppen das Doppelte verlangen, weil sie obendrein ganze Wandbereiche besetzen und die Griffe und der Routenbau für sie mehr kosten. Heute Vormittag musste ich zum Beispiel die Trainerin des russischen Nachwuchsteams zu mir holen und ihr nochmal unsere Regeln erklären. Sie selbst stand beim Sichern rund acht Meter entfernt von der Wand mitten in der Halle. Ihre Reaktion: Sie sei ja aber die Trainerin der Nationalmannschaft! Was willst du da noch sagen? Und manchmal sind die Coaches selber mit den jungen Athleten überfordert. Trotzdem ist es dann wieder eine Symbiose. Es geht oft wild zu, aber dennoch will man die Trainingsteams dahaben, weil es ja auch lässig ist. Es ist halt noch viel Aufklärungsarbeit zu leisten.

MH: Auch unter den Hobbysportlern gibt es ganz unterschiedliche Zielgruppen – Junge, Ältere, Anfänger und erfahrene Kletterer. Hier kommen Leute mit sehr unterschiedlichen Einstellungen zum Klettern zusammen. Gehört es zu den Aufgaben einer Halle, den Kunden eine gewisse Werthaltung zu vermitteln?

Reini: Manchmal fühle ich mich dafür zuständig und manchmal auch nicht. Aber dann denke ich mir wieder, ich will das Klima hier drinnen so gut gestalten, dass alle miteinander auskommen. Dann komme ich nicht drum herum manchen Leuten zu erklären, dass es so leider nicht funktioniert, oder dass es anders eben weniger gefährlich sein könnte. Ich glaube, jeder Hallenbetreiber pflichtet mir bei, wenn ich sage, dass es extrem mühsam ist, eine gewisse Hallenkultur oder eine Benimm-dich-Kultur zu etablieren.

In Fitnessstudios ist es total normal, dass man nicht barfuß oder oben ohne trainiert. Bei uns gehen die Kletterer barfuß mit stinkenden Füßen ins Restaurant und setzen sich verschwitzt und ohne Shirt neben jemanden, der gerade ein Menü isst. Das geht einfach nicht! Ich höre

when I'm out rock climbing." But this is a sports center! The real rock climbing gurus and certain mountain guides are the worst. They come in here with their huge rucksacks and empty everything all over the floor – from crampons to pickaxes, they've got it all. I'd be embarrassed, but some people just don't have any shame. I know that they're not doing it out of spite or on purpose, but educating them is a grind. We've recently started to write our rules on large boards to make them more obvious. Then some people complain that we ban everything. But I'm simply pointing out the normal way to behave. You just can't make coffee on the boulder mat, or, as a paraclimber, lie down with a cigarette in your mouth while belaying outdoors. It just doesn't work that way!

MH: Indoor climbing is often compared to fitness training. Many gyms respond to their customers' demands by offering additional facilities and services, such as fitness studios and gym equipment or yoga courses. Does the KI do this as well, and do you think it's a good idea?

Reini: We have a fitness studio with exercise machines, which is open to everyone, despite being primarily set up to provide supplementary training for competitive climbers. We also run yoga courses and offer child care, which are free of charge to our gym users and are extremely popular. One of my roles as a manager is to provide and expand on this additional range of services.

However, I find it important to stress that our customers have to be able to "climb". Even our simplest boulders require you to know how to climb. We look back on a very long tradition of climbing. It seems as if virtually everyone here is a climber, and I want my customers to have climbing running through their veins. I don't want them to be Ninja Warriors. Our gym is already full, so I don't want to fill it with even more people who aren't proper climbers.

dann: „Am Fels mache ich es doch auch so.“ Aber das hier ist eine Sportanlage! Die richtigen Felsgurus und so mancher Bergführer sind die Schlimmsten. Sie kommen mit ihren großen Rucksäcken daher und leeren gleich mal alles über den ganzen Boden verstreut aus – Steigeisen, Pickel, alles ist dabei. Ich würde mich schämen, aber manche Leute sind da total schmerzbehaftet. Sie meinen es ja auch nie böse, trotzdem ist die Aufklärungsarbeit sehr mühsam.

Wir weisen jetzt mit großen Tafeln auf unsere Regeln hin. Manche beschweren sich dann, dass bei uns alles verboten sei. Aber nein, wir möchten nur darauf aufmerksam machen, was normal ist. Man kann eben nicht auf der Boulderplatte Kaffee kochen oder als Paraclimber im Liegen mit einer Zigarette im Mund outdoors sichern. Bei aller Liebe.

MH: Hallenklettern wird oft auch gerne mit Fitnessstraining verglichen. Viele Hallen reagieren auf die Nachfrage der Besucher nach zusätzlichen Angeboten, indem sie zum Beispiel Fitnessräume und Fitnessgeräte zur Verfügung stellen oder Yogakurse anbieten. Gibt es das auch im KI und findest du die Ergänzung gut?

Reini: Wir haben hier auch ein Fitnessstudio mit Übungsgeräten, das in erster Linie für das Ergänzungstraining der Wettkampfsportler gedacht war, aber auch von Breitensportlern genutzt werden kann und wird. Genauso bieten wir auch Yogakurse oder Kinderbetreuung an, die für unsere Hallenbesucher gratis sind und extrem gut ankommen. Es gehört zum Management, das Angebot für die Kunden auf diese Art zu bereichern oder großzügiger zu gestalten.

Trotzdem möchte ich betonen, dass ich will, dass man in unserer Halle eben „klettern“ können muss, auch bei unseren leichtesten Bouldern. Unser Umfeld blickt auf eine sehr lange Klettertradition zurück. Gefühlt klettert hier beinahe jeder und ich möchte, dass meine Kunden im Geiste Kletterer und keine Ninja Warriors sind. Die Halle ist bereits voll, ich will sie nicht noch mehr mit einem Publikum füllen, das nicht zu uns Kletterern passt.



Jakob Schubert training in the outdoor area of KI

MH: A number of professional teams come to the KI to train. What do you offer them that other gyms don't?

Reini: In the area of lead climbing, I think that we have a lot more difficult, competition-level routes and expensive holds and volumes than many other gyms can afford or want to pay for. One of the reasons for this is the fantastic relationship we have with the climbing association. The association has rights to use the gym and sets its own routes for its athletes. When they're not training, these routes are open to everyone. This is most beneficial to foreign teams that come here to train. In other countries, training centers are often only accessible to athletes. It would actually be cool if the route setters of foreign teams would also provide a certain number of routes in return for being able to use our facilities.

MH: Indoor climbing is growing in popularity. Where have you seen the biggest changes?

Reini: The biggest changes have taken place in the area of bouldering. Twenty years ago, bouldering was seen as a way to warm up for climbing routes. But then it became a discipline in its own right and it's really taken off. The bouldering gym boom is showing no signs of abating, partly because many things are much easier to handle in this area than in lead climbing gyms. On the other hand, this growth has caused certain problems to become more apparent, such as occupational safety and sufficient ventilation.

MH: What do you think a modern climbing gym needs to succeed?

Reini: That's a good question! You're successful if you manage your business well and the climbing scene in your region appreciates your work. If you open a climbing gym in a place where there is no climbing culture, then you'll go bust. It takes decades for a climbing scene to take root and grow. You need to adapt to your surroundings. Having all three disciplines under one roof like we do is insane! And bringing together professional and recreational climbers is equally as insane! A good café or bistro where your customers can spend time socializing and interacting with your staff is also a great idea.

MH: Do you expect indoor climbing to continue to grow in popularity? What impact will the 2020 Olympics have on the climbing gym landscape?

Reini: I've been in this business for a very long time. For several years it's almost impossible to explain why the growth trend continues. At some point, there must be a decline, or at least stagnation. But seeing that there still isn't, I don't trust myself to make predictions anymore. I believe that good offers will keep attracting more customers, while poor services will scare them away. Climbing will continue to grow wherever we put in the work. If gyms are neglected due to there not being enough money for new holds or due to poor quality route setting, they won't be able to balance the books, and there will be some big bankruptcies. Having said that, there are still some gyms that

MH: Zahlreiche Athletenteams besuchen das KI zum Trainieren. Was finden sie hier, was andere Hallen nicht bieten können?

Reini: Ich glaube, dass wir im Leadbereich so viele schwere, wett-kampfspezifische Routen mit so vielen teuren Griffen und Volumes haben, wie sie sich viele andere Hallen nicht leisten wollen oder können. Das ist unter anderem auf die super Zusammenarbeit mit dem Kletterverband zurückzuführen. Der Verband hat ein Nutzungsrecht in der Halle und baut für seine Athleten eigene Routen, die jedem zur Verfügung stehen, wenn gerade nicht trainiert wird. Auch ausländische Teams profitieren davon, wenn sie hierher zum Trainieren kommen. Die Leistungszentren anderer Nationen sind oft nur exklusiv für deren Athleten zugänglich. Wäre übrigens cool, wenn ausländische Teams uns im Gegenzug mal ihre Routenbauer zur Verfügung stellen würden.

MH: Hallenklettern wächst, die Kletterhallenlandschaft entwickelt sich weiter. In welchen Aspekten hast du die größten Veränderungen wahrgenommen?

Reini: Die größten Veränderungen haben sicher im Boulderbereich stattgefunden. Vor 20 Jahren wurde gebouldert um sich für das Routenklettern aufzuwärmen. Dann wurde das Bouldern zur eigenen Disziplin und ist regelrecht explodiert. Der Boulderhallenboom hält auch deshalb an, weil in dem Bereich vieles einfacher zu handeln ist als in Hallen mit Vorstiegswänden. Mit dem Wachstum rücken aber auch Probleme in den Mittelpunkt, die es früher nicht gab: Beispiel Arbeitssicherheit oder ausreichende Belüftung.

MH: Welche sind für dich die Erfolgsfaktoren einer modernen Kletterhalle?

Reini: Schwierig zu sagen. Erfolgreich bist du dann, wenn du gut gewirtschaftet hast und die Kletterszene in der Region dir deine Arbeit auch dankt. Wenn du eine Kletterhalle in einer Region baust, in der es keine Kletterkultur gibt, dann wirst du untergehen. Bis eine Kletterszene entsteht und wächst, dauert es Jahrzehnte. Du musst dich in dieser Hinsicht an die Umgebung anpassen. Alle drei Disziplinen unter einem Dach zu haben, so wie bei uns, das ist ein Wahnsinn! Spitzensport und Breitensport unter einem Dach zu haben ist ein Wahnsinn! Es ist auch toll, eine gute Cafeteria oder ein Bistro zu haben, wo sich die Kunden gerne aufhalten und mit den Angestellten interagieren können.

MH: Wird der Aufschwung des Indoor Kletterns auch in Zukunft anhalten? Welche Auswirkungen wird Olympia 2020 auf die Entwicklung der Hallenlandschaft haben?

Reini: Ich bin schon sehr lange in diesem Business. Seit vielen Jahren können wir uns nicht erklären, warum der Aufwärtstrend ungehindert anhält. Irgendwann muss doch der Einbruch oder zumindest eine Stagnation kommen. Aber bis jetzt ist es nicht so, deswegen traue ich mich auch gar nicht mehr, irgendwelche Prognosen abzugeben. Ich glaube, dass gute Angebote immer mehr Kunden anziehen werden und schlechte Angebote die Kunden eben vergraulen. Überall dort, wo gute

essentially look like "junk gyms", but nevertheless perform well. This brings us back to our sausage stand analogy. A gym like that needs to have customers who love eating sausages. Without wishing to sound negative, whether you're a sausage stand or a gourmet restaurant, it all comes down to your standards. A gourmet restaurant can just as easily go bust.

MH: What is your favorite climbing discipline or sport in general? Are there any types of sport or leisure activities that give you the energy you need for your professional and day-to-day life?

Reini: I've reached a more mature age and no longer feel the need to perform at a high professional level. The activities I do vary, depending on the season. In summer, I still love to go climbing and I thrive almost exclusively on first ascents. Finding and bolting new alpine climbing routes is what thrills me the most. I hardly ever visit climbing gardens because they just don't interest me. I don't climb as hard as I used to and I keep fit by route setting in the gym. In winter, I go ski touring or freeriding, tackle some steep descents, or go cross-country skiing.

KI – Kletterzentrum Innsbruck / Innsbruck Climbing Center

Opened in May 2017, the Kletterzentrum Innsbruck (KI) welcomes around 250,000 visitors a year. With a climbing surface of over 61,300 square feet (5,700 square meters), it has space for more than 600 routes (220 lines) and 200 boulders. These include walls for the three disciplines of lead, boulder, and speed in both the indoor and large outdoor area. The KI is home to the National Competence Centre of the Austrian Climbing Association (KVÖ) and the Tyrolean Climbing Association (KVT). It is spacious enough to open its doors to amateur climbers 365 days of the year, even when hosting competitions. The striking facility with its three free-standing outdoor structures was designed by architect Thomas Schnizer from Innsbruck. Costing 12 million euros, the project was financed by the city of Innsbruck, the state of Tyrol, and the Austrian government, and is operated by Alpenverein Kletterzentrum Innsbruck GmbH (Alpine Association Innsbruck Climbing Center), that invested just under a million euros in commissioning the facility.

Das Kletterzentrum Innsbruck wurde im Mai 2017 eröffnet und zählt zuletzt 250.000 Eintritte pro Jahr. Auf einer Kletterfläche von 5.700 Quadratmetern ist Platz für mehr als 600 Routen (220 Linien) und 200 Boulder. Dabei sind sowohl im Innen- als auch im großzügigen Außenbereich Wände für die drei Disziplinen Lead, Bouldern und Speed zu finden. Die Struktur beherbergt das Bundesleistungszentrum der Kletterverbände Österreich (KVÖ) und Tirol (KVT). Die Anlage bietet genügend Raum, um an 365 Tagen im Jahr für den Breitensport zugänglich zu sein und zeitgleich Wettbewerbe auszutragen. Das optisch prägnante Konzept mit drei freistehenden Elementen im Außenbereich stammt vom Innsbrucker Architekt Thomas Schnizer. Das 12 Millionen-Projekt wurde von der Stadt Innsbruck, dem Land Tirol und dem Österreichischen Bund finanziert, Betreiber ist die Alpenverein Kletterzentrum Innsbruck GmbH, die für die Inbetriebnahme der Anlage eine knappe Million investiert hat.

Arbeit geleistet wird, wird das Klettern wachsen. Wenn Hallen vernachlässigt werden, weil kein Geld für neue Griffe da ist oder der Routenbau nicht gut ist, wird die Rechnung nicht aufgehen und es wird auch einige riesige Pleiten geben. Es gibt natürlich auch Hallen, die im Grunde genommen wie „Ramschhallen“ ausschauen, die aber trotzdem funktionieren. Das sind die Würstelbuden. Du musst dann halt Kunden haben, die gerne Würstel essen. Nicht negativ gemeint, es kommt ganz auf den Anspruch an – Würstelbude oder Haubenlokal. Es ist nicht gesagt, dass das Haubenlokal nicht genauso gut pleite gehen kann.

MH: Was ist deine persönliche Lieblingsdisziplin im Klettern oder im Sport generell? Gibt es bestimmte Sportarten oder sonstige Freizeitbeschäftigungen, aus denen du die Energie für Beruf, Arbeit, Alltag ziehst?

Reini: Ich bin mittlerweile gereifteren Alters und habe nicht mehr den Anspruch an mich selbst, Spitzenleistungen abrufen zu wollen. Ich mache total gerne das, was die Jahreszeit gerade zulässt. Im Sommer gehe ich nach wie vor gerne klettern, wobei ich mir die Energie dort fast ausschließlich aus Erstbegehungen hole. Neue Linien im alpinen Bereich finden und erschließen, das taugt mir. Ich habe bisher 1250 Seillängen erschlossen und habe immer noch viele Projekte. In Klettergärten gehe ich kaum noch, weil mich das nicht mehr interessiert. So schwer wie früher kletterte ich nicht mehr, und fit halte ich mich in der Halle mit Routenbau. Im Winter gehe ich skitouren oder freeriden, mache auch einige steilere Abfahrten oder gehe langlaufen.



“YOU'RE SUCCESSFUL IF YOU MANAGE YOUR BUSINESS WELL AND THE CLIMBING SCENE IN YOUR REGION APPRECIATES YOUR WORK.”

„ERFOLGREICH BIST DU DANN, WENN DU GUT GEWIRTSCHAFTET HAST UND DIE KLETTERSZENE IN DER REGION DIR DEINE ARBEIT AUCH DANKT.“

THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN ROUTE SETTING

THE ART OF DESIGNING A MEMORABLE CLIMBING COMPETITION

TEXT & PHOTOS: UDO NEUMANN



◆ *The first climbing competition on an artificial wall, back in Munich in 1989, was definitely a memorable experience for me. In the early years of competitions on artificial walls, hold and wall design was influenced by the hardest sport climbs of that time. The wall in Munich was grey, resembling the famous limestone cliffs in southern France.*

At this point, sport climbing already had its rock stars – and they were all here! When the two biggest names of the international climbing scene of the time, Patrick Edlinger and Lynn Hill, won, I couldn't remember a more exciting event.

Thirty years later, while watching old videos as research for this article, I realize just how little climbing action actually took place. Back then, competitions were carried out in one discipline: lead climbing. The competitors had all the time in the world to inspect the routes and change their minds while they were climbing. Everything took forever and most climbers didn't dare to express their creativity for fear that a mistake would ruin their chances of success.

On that day, both the athletes and the audience certainly had some misconceptions about what it would take to be successful in this competition. The two most prominent German competitors were prime examples of the skillsets and experience the audience thought were key to success. On the one hand, there was Wolfgang Güllich, the first man to climb 8b and 8b+ – would his legendary physical abilities put him ahead of the competition? Or would he be beaten by Stefan Glowacz,



World Championships 1991: François Legrand and the birth of modern flow climbing style.

who was not able to replicate Wolfgang's most challenging climbing feats, but had a modern and flowing style that had been working well for him at previous competitions on rock. I'll spare you the details of how Wolfgang's climbing went, but Stefan had no difficulty making the transition from rock to plastic, and became a strong competitor during the early years of climbing competitions. Now, the historic Munich competition is celebrating its 30-year anniversary. In this article, I will delve into what has changed over these 30 years.

30 YEARS OF COMPETITIONS ON ARTIFICIAL WALLS (1989–2019)

Just two years later – at the first official World Championship in Frankfurt in 1991 – the changes were already obvious. While the panels still resembled rock surfaces, the routes were a lot steeper than in Munich, and the walls themselves were huge. Many successful rock climbers had real-

ized that competitions were not for them or jumped ship. Wolfgang Güllich, for example, along with Kurt Albert, had become route setters.

Apart from its fascinating wall, Frankfurt also stood out for another reason – the birth of a new climbing style. The added steepness favored a climbing style with less control and more commitment and flow. In the men's finals, for example, some competitors had difficulty committing to their decisions and wasted energy trying to find controllable solutions with a high safety margin. But one man stood out above the others: François Legrand became the first World Champion with moves that left the audience in awe. His speed and fluid movements alone put him a notch above his fellow competitors, but it was one move in particular that marked a new chapter in climbing techniques: completely turned away from the wall, he came face to face with the audience, shortly before using a figure-of-four move, leaving the audience stunned.

By this time, climbing had become a spectacle. Instead of watching athletes try to avoid making mistakes, the audience came to witness climbing moves that they were unable to pull off themselves, as François Legrand and also Yuiji Hirayama did in those finals.

THE ART OF ROUTE SETTING

When the very first competitions took place on artificial walls, setters were considered artists, the most artistic and sophisticated of all being the legendary Antoine LeMenestrel. He was the chief setter in Nuremberg in 1991. Kurt Albert and Wolfgang Güllich were responsible for setting the route for the men's finals. Aware that the young

competitors had additional movement patterns at their disposal, they set every hold at maximum difficulty. It was one in the morning when Antoine finally found time to test the route they had set. He climbed the wall easily, commenting on each of the moves: perhaps this one should be turned 20 degrees, perhaps that one could be made more interesting. He left no move uncommented on, while completing the climb at lightning speed. The next morning, Wolfgang and Kurt both told me that it had been the most impressive climbing performance they had ever seen.

Antoine was thirty years ahead of his time. Already in the early 1990s, he was not just putting small holds on the wall to tire competitors out and make them fall, but creating opportunities for the climbers to express themselves. Back then, we evidently already had great walls, capable setters and fluid, mobile climbers – the future was certainly looking bright.

THE NOVELTY WEARS OFF

Unfortunately, things did not turn out quite as bright as it was hoped. In the 1990s, when competitions were still unfamiliar and novel, it was easy to find sponsors. When Yuji Hirayama won at a competition in Nuremberg in 1989, he was awarded the equivalent of €5,000 and a BMW 323i. The German Championships, too, were sponsored by car manufacturers and international corporations. However, as the novelty wore off, there was less and less money to be won from climbing competitions and everything became less glamorous. Architectural experiments in wall design came to a halt and walls became more generic. Nowadays, with a couple of exceptions, it is difficult to tell the different walls used in a World Cup season apart. Most face the audience, making it difficult to see just how steep they are unless you are watching live. But even in that case, walls have to be positioned in the right direction, otherwise the moves of a world-class competition could end up not reflecting the reality.

The setters were under pressure to find a solution, forcing many to fall into a mentality in which they mostly tried to create routes that would eliminate climbers to make the competition work. Holds were small or became smaller, but tended to be mostly incut and positive. On these holds, climbers with good crimp strength could compensate for some less-than-ideal positions and moves by pulling themselves into the wall.



1991 vs. 2005: Wall design was better in the 90s (left). When walls are facing the audience, it's hard to comprehend the steepness and difficulty of a climb (right).

Before advances in hold design were introduced, it was difficult to test the climbers' coordination. With it only being possible to test contact strength, there was a risk that climbers would not be able to move at all. Fortunately, we are still only talking about lead competitions and even with the limited hold shapes of the time, the setters overcame this challenge by setting their routes to test efficiency and stamina. As a result, routes might have had up to one hundred moves. But while efficiency and stamina are very important for climbing, they are not the most exciting athletic feats.

In addition to climbing competitions becoming less glamorous, climbing was also struggling with a couple of other issues. For example, the setters, the athletes and the audience all wanted – and still want – to see equality

of opportunity and a level playing field for all competitors. But there have been some issues with this in the past.

Morpho: If the difficulty of a climb or move is highly dependent on the body shape or size of the climber, this may result in a "morpho" situation in which the climber cannot compensate for their body length and therefore their reach, regardless of how smartly they move or how strong they are, and this is perceived as unfair. While this is usually code for it being "hard for the short", it can be also the opposite. Being able to reach a hold is one of the most important criteria for fairness.

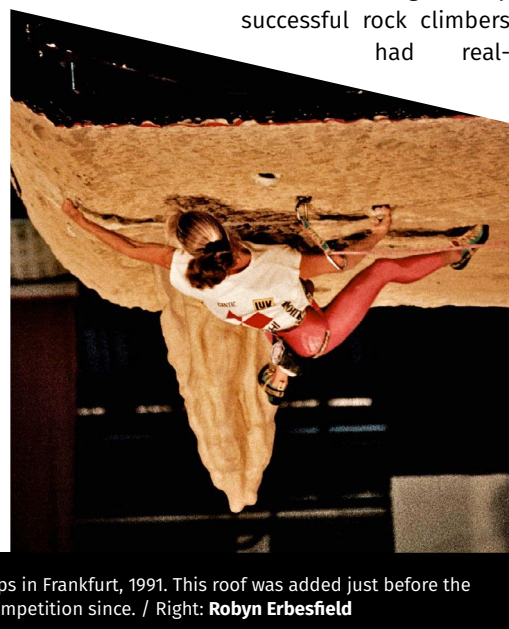
Relative strength: This is the ratio of strength to body size, i.e. how strong someone is compared with their size. It reflects a climber's ability to control or move their body through



Ja-In Kim 2005: In a "morpho" situation, the climber cannot compensate for their body length and therefore their reach, and this is perceived as unfair.



Left: Kurt Albert route setting at the World Championships in Frankfurt, 1991. This roof was added just before the finals, something that has never happened in a major competition since. / Right: Robyn Erbesfield





Left: World Games 2005 –not a lot of variety in climbing holds / Right: Innsbruck 2018 – advancements in hold design have changed competition route setting.



space. All else being equal, smaller individuals have higher relative strength. On rock, this advantage is often cancelled out by reach, as demonstrated by 1.88-meter-tall Adam Ondra, one of the most accomplished rock climbers of all time. To avoid a morpho situation as described above, setters had to position holds so that they were within reach of the smallest competitors. Now only being able to adjust the difficulty level by changing the size of the holds, they found themselves in a catch-22 situation. Because of the strength-to-weight ratio, they had now created a disadvantage for taller climbers. On these routes, relative strength and the resulting stamina are crucial. As a result, climbers worked to become lighter and lighter, and

eating disorders were not unheard of.

Since competitions mostly took place on two-dimensional surfaces, climbers became specialists of just one plane; spatial awareness in the third dimension was less important. The technique of pulling and holding created a spate of climbers with very light lower bodies, strong upper bodies and a lot of contact strength. Their pacing tended to be steady and uniform, and dynamic climbing was rarely recommended because of the risk it entailed and the small and difficult nature of the contact points.

While the setters could still make lead competitions work by testing the efficiency and

stamina of the competitors, this was not an option for the boulder contests that had begun to emerge in the late 1990s. The existing holds were simply too limited. A new solution was needed – and soon found.

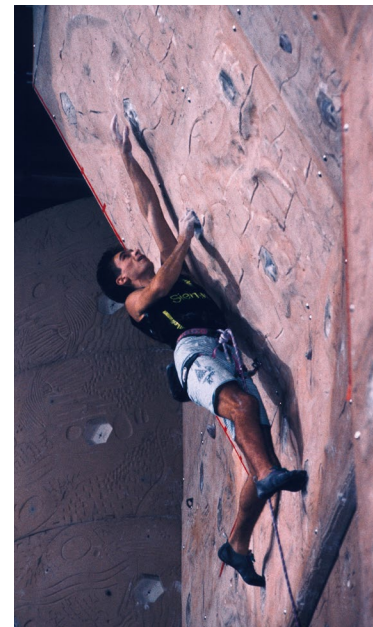
ADVANCEMENTS IN HOLD DESIGN

Fortunately, we have seen a lot of changes in the world of hold design. Modern holds are the main weapon of today's setters, as they allow them to limit energy transfer with laser-like precision.

Terms like power, strength and force are still used inconsistently within the climbing community. A force is a vector quantity that has both magnitude and direction. Force is really another name for energy transfer, and can therefore only exist in collisions. The force that gets measured is based entirely on how well the energy is transferred. Because forces are vectors, the effect of an individual force on an object is often canceled out by the effect of another force. Reaction forces include frictional forces and tensional forces. During climbing, friction acts in different directions, even horizontally, on your hands and feet, and that is what stops you from slipping off.

When the climbing competition community realized that there was a lack of holds for bouldering contests, hold types for specific setting were developed.

Blocked holds and pockets: In lead climbing, pockets had already been used for quite a while to force sequences, as they are too small to be matched with both hands. Nowadays, pockets and blocked holds are often



Fairness. Left – 1991: the climber is standing on holds. If he were much shorter, the move would be a lot harder. / Right – nowadays: volumes, when used right, allow the climber to position herself wherever she wants.



Tension vs. alignment. World Championships 2005, lead finals – on the left, Tomasz Mrazek's left arm is not aligned with the hold, a strategy that is only possible on positive holds. On the right, Akiyo Noguchi finds perfect alignment under the hold, just as needed on the sloping holds used today.

used in both lead climbing and bouldering to ensure accuracy.

Volumes: Volumes were used to bring a third dimension back into the picture. With volumes, there tends to be no distinct sequence and, when used correctly, they allow you to position yourself wherever you want. Volumes also open up more opportunities to set routes for compression and balance.

Direction holds: A direction hold is a combination of the actual form of a hold and how it is used. Nowadays, setters have a number of sophisticated direction holds at their disposal. They force the climber to use the hold in a certain position – this could be a poor sloper that can only be held when the climber's weight is below the hold.

Dual texture holds: Dual texture holds restrict how the climber is able to use their thumb.

This means that the climber has to adapt their body tension and positioning.

Non-graspable holds: The slab problem in picture A (Munich 2016) was the first problem that allowed hardly any force transfer from the hands to the contact points.

CLIMBING COMPETITIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

After all these options were invented, competitions could finally offer a setting in which a diverse number of aspects – raw power, coordination and problem-solving aspects – could be tested. Now it was up to the setters to use their newly gained options wisely.

How do the setters work?

The walls we have nowadays provide a good spread of angles and are versatile enough to

set on. Because of the ever-evolving skills of climbers, setters need to constantly think out of the box and be open to creating new movements and therefore approaching setting as a collaborative process. For bouldering, for example, experienced setters organize their team in groups of three working on one boulder problem. As such, competition setting is no longer an individual exercise, but a creative group process.

Risk, intensity and complexity

The risk, intensity and complexity (RIC) scale gives route setters more options to assess the difficulty of a climb by allowing comparisons between problems of the same grade. Risk, intensity and complexity values are determined not only by the difficulty grade, but also by the average competitor being set for. There are values inherent to every climbing movement and hold with regard to a specific grade. Depending on the movement, hold

“MODERN HOLDS ARE THE MAIN WEAPON OF TODAY'S SETTERS, AS THEY ALLOW THEM TO LIMIT ENERGY TRANSFER WITH LASER-LIKE PRECISION.”



Tomoa Narasaki and the re-invention of the proximal to distal pattern.

Traditionally, climbing has mostly consisted of distal to proximal moves, with climbers engaging with the contact points through their limbs before the trunk. Nowadays, successful climbers in Asia in particular are known to reverse this pattern, initiating their movements through the sweet spot that is their center of gravity, like the climber on the right. This proximal to distal pattern makes just about any movement considerably easier.

selection and style, the values in the scale for a given problem will rise and fall: 1 equating to extremely below average, 3 to average and 5 to way above average. A route can therefore be described as below average in risk, high or above average in intensity, and average in complexity.

Risk: In the world of competition climbing, risk does not refer to the risk of injury or danger. Rather, risk is categorized by movements that are hard, if not impossible, to recover

from after initiating the movement or require focus to maintain. Therefore, the more likely you are to fall, the higher the risk.

Intensity: Intensity describes the physical difficulty of the climb, for example, how hard a climber needs to squeeze or pull. It is also a question of how tired competitors will be by the end of the problem.

Complexity: Complexity is determined by which skills are needed by the climber to

complete the problem. Low complexity, for example, is when it is immediately apparent what needs to be done.

In climbing, risk, intensity and complexity never exist in isolation. Good setting for competitions is about achieving the right balance of these three aspects, in light of the fact that a boulder competition does not focus on a single problem, but rather the entire sequence of problems the competitors are facing. If you start with a delicate slab, followed by an intense compression problem with coordination moves requiring lots of strength, and end with a complex, rhythm-changing climb with body positions that are very uncomfortable, the experience and the outcome can be vastly different. Modern route setters have all these options, allowing them to test the emotional, psychological, cognitive and physical abilities of the climbers. With this in mind, do competitors even stand a chance?

HOW THE CLIMBERS ADAPT

As a coach, I'm on the side of the climbers on this issue. And it's great to see that climbers have found sophisticated strategies to deal with these new challenges posed by the setters.

Climbs require solutions that work. When the first climbing competitions were held, the ideal solution consisted of finding the right hand and foot sequences, known among climbers as the Beta. With the introduction of volumes, the Beta became much less obvious. Now, what will work in each case and lead to success depends entirely on the individual climber.

To find a solution that works for them, climbers have to compare their skills against the requirements of the problem, and then gauge the result. Successful athletes focus on solving the problem in their own way, rather than trying to guess the intentions of the route setters. Therefore, being courageous and confident in their decisions and knowing that there is no single right way of doing it is the decisive factor for success in a climbing competition.

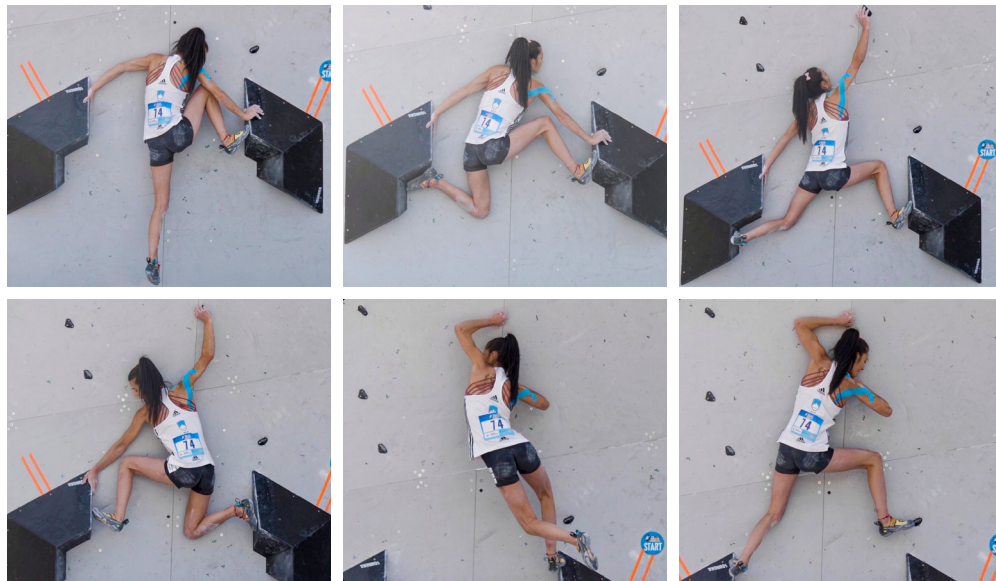
It has always been vitally important for climbers to recognize when to continue with their current path and when to change course. This, together with the ability to make clear, swift decisions in your best interest, is called adaptability. To be adaptive, climbers need to process all of the available information to understand the underlying principles of a

given move. To improve their game, climbers prepare for competitions by analyzing old information, habits and ways of doing things to see if they can deduce ways of improving. The top competitors in the sport are confident in their skills and trust their own judgment and resourcefulness. Climbing has always been about this vision – having the power to imagine, be creative and find alternatives.

From the early days of climbing to the modern day, the face of climbing has certainly changed. On a physical level, the newly developed hold styles and setting strategies have created a new challenge for climbers, shifting from simply producing force to actually transferring it. Compared with competitors in the 1990s, modern climbers deploy a smaller contact force, shorter contact time, smaller

impulse and higher friction coefficient, which leads to a more continuous movement of the center of pressure and less chaotic force and time graphs, and ultimately a greater smoothness factor.

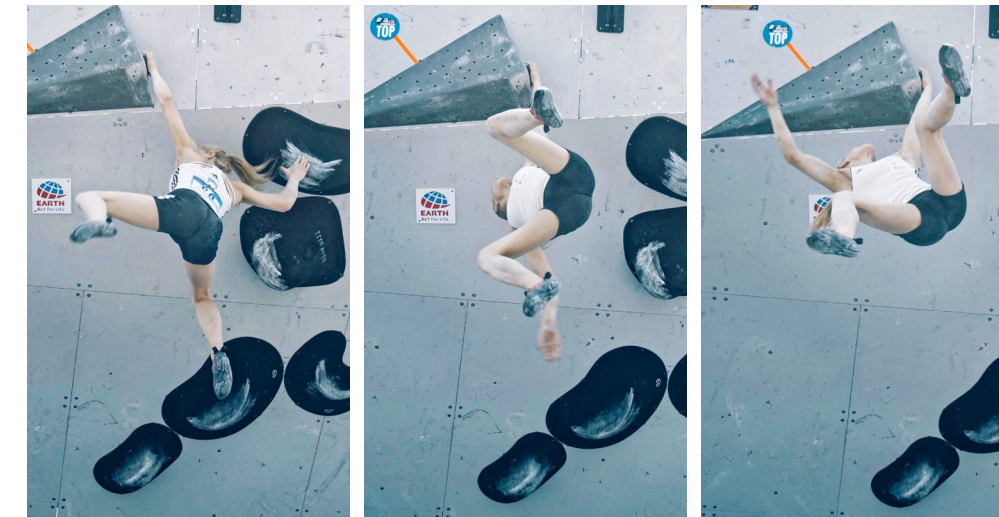
"IN CLIMBING, RISK, INTENSITY AND COMPLEXITY NEVER EXIST IN ISOLATION."



During the four or five minutes they have to find a solution, the competitors have to compare their skills against the requirements of the problem, and then gauge the result.



Climbers have to detect individual affordances and distinguish possible from impossible actions.



Mixing and matching trajectories.

Often, we perceive movement to be linear but, at the level of the joint, there is no such thing. There are muscles that pull on tendons that pull bones in arcs and circles. By understanding this, we can see linear motion as a finely choreographed sequence of arcs and rotation that, when pieced together, create a straight line. Translational and rotational kinetic energy are exchanged in a "whip-like" transfer. We distinguish these as "point", "loop", "backward pendulum" and "parabolic" transitions. These different transitions form a continuum rather than distinct types.

Nobody is better than Janja Garnbret at utilizing the transfer between translational and rotational kinetic energy to control the dynamics of a swing. Timed right, rotational power turns those arcs and rotations into powerful trajectories.



Tomoa Narasaki, beta breaker.

Successful athletes focus on solving the problem in their own way, rather than trying to guess the intentions of the route setters. Therefore, being courageous and confident in their decisions and knowing that there is no single right way of doing it is the decisive factor for success in a climbing competition.

Udo Neumann is one of the climbing world's most highly respected and sought after biomechanics, skill acquisition, and motor control experts. He began climbing in 1982, and since then, he's been documenting and analyzing the sport of bouldering in all sorts of media – books, films, photographs, and mixed media. He's shared his findings and knowledge in countless publications, both off- and online. He authored some of the most successful training books, like "Performance Rock Climbing", "Der XI. Grad", and "Lizenz zum Klettern". Recent video publications include "Climbing Technique of the 21st Century" and the "Ideas to Improve your Climbing" series. Udo has traveled all continents, rock climbing

and bouldering. From 2009 until 2017, he was the German Bouldering Team coach, training world and European champions. Nowadays he's advising federations and training teams as well as coaching athletes and coaches.

UDO NEUMANN

Born: 1963

Lives in: Köln, Germany

Background: Master in Sports Science, author and filmmaker, consultant and coach



CLIMBING HOLDS

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

TEXT & PHOTOS: JACKIE HUEFTLE

Author's Note: After interviewing many significant early hold makers, it became clear that climbing hold design evolved relatively quickly, and at times similar innovations were occurring concurrently on different continents. These bursts of evolution happen when there is a need, and in the mid-1980s through the early 2000s the need for innovation in indoor climbing was there. In this article I've done my best to share the information I was told combined with the results of the research I've done. As many of the interviewees stated, much of this happened quite a while ago and specific dates for specific innovations are no longer clear. If you find anything here to be a wildly offensive misstatement, please be assured that the author and represented parties have done their best to be accurate and all involved are very open to additional information which the author will use in her ongoing research and for future projects on the subject.



Straight Up PE Hold early 90s

e-Grips original Aragon PU mid 90s

e-Grips modern Aragon PU late 90s

VooDoo PU with rubber bottom - mid/late 90s

Stone Age PE - early 2000s

Teknik PE - early 2000s

Haptic, Aragon PU - 2017

Haptic, Aragon PU - 2015

1st Generation Kilter, Aragon PU - 2013

◆ **Climbing holds have been a crucial part of the evolution of the sport of climbing. With modular holds and volumes, route setters can easily change walls to hit any difficulty or climbing style, thus accelerating the learning curve and allowing new ideas and skills to be thoroughly explored. This in turn pushes outdoor development, as climbers rapidly become stronger and more capable across a spectrum of hold types, movement styles, and challenges.**

This concept has remained true since the beginning, when the first walls were developed by incorporating different rock features into one artificial structure for mountaineers to practice on. Those first mini polyoliths were generally made outdoors from rocks, brick, and mortar, and later indoor walls were modified similarly (more on that history on page 4: Christian Popien – Climbing Gym Concepts 2.0).

The possibilities for rock formations and moves are endless. To represent a variety of challenges and difficulties, wall builders quickly realized their options were either increasingly larger walls or walls that could be changed. The first references found to a system like this were vague descriptions of early adjustable wood walls with switchable pegs made in France in the 1950s. The pegs can only be assumed to be an early version of movable climbing holds.

From there, the next clear reference comes from the UK. Perhaps due to adverse weather and a wide variety of available outdoor crags to entice during more temperate months, the UK went through a heavy period of artificial and indoor wall and hold development starting around 1960. By 1970, the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) thought it important to document the history in a book on the subject, titled simply *Artificial Climbing Walls*. Details include their earliest outdoor walls, their first indoor walls, development of challenges for these walls, and, perhaps most intriguing and understated, this paragraph:

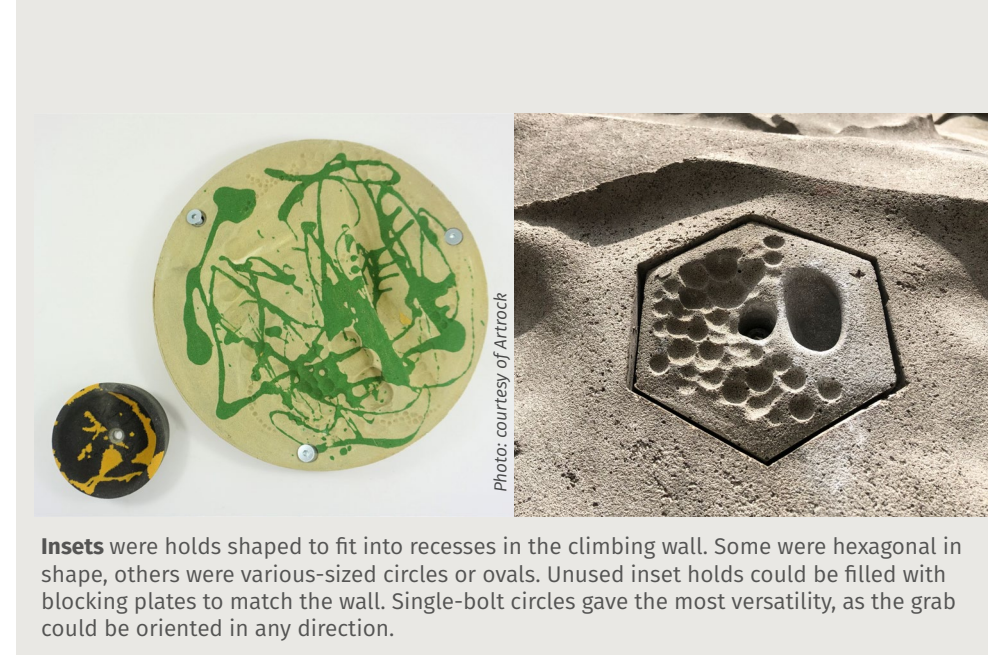
Modifying or adjusting is achieved by varying the angle of a section of the wall and by the use of moveable or adjustable holds which can vary from the semi-permanent holds inserted into sockets or receptacles built into the wall, to holds that are plugged into a frame resembling a large peg board. These holds can be shaped, textured, and arranged to resemble the detailed rock features encountered on a climb. (p.37)

Early walls were tuned (adjusted for difficulty) when they were built or changed into climbing walls. Routes were set using chipped, carved, or otherwise modified brick, wood, epoxied-on real rock, concrete (p 1), artificial texture (one example is described as Casemite and sand), and even metal piping. Most striking is a photo of one such adaptable wall, the West Common Sports Centre, Scunthorpe (p 2), that shows wooden holds of various shapes seemingly plugged into a brick wall. Empty plugholes are also visible. Each wooden block has a telltale hole in the middle of it, something climbers now would easily identify as a bolthole. A diagram provided on page 57 of the BMC book eliminates all doubt. Credited to the architect **Leonard C. Anderson** and developed at the Royal Belfast Academy Institution, this pre-1970s wall was one of the earliest truly tunable climbing structures. A system of metal sockets was built into a brick wall at regular intervals and holds were made that would slide into the socket and then be secured with a single central bolt (p 3). The sockets were eventually abandoned, but the bolt system remains the primary method of attaching climbing holds to walls to this day.

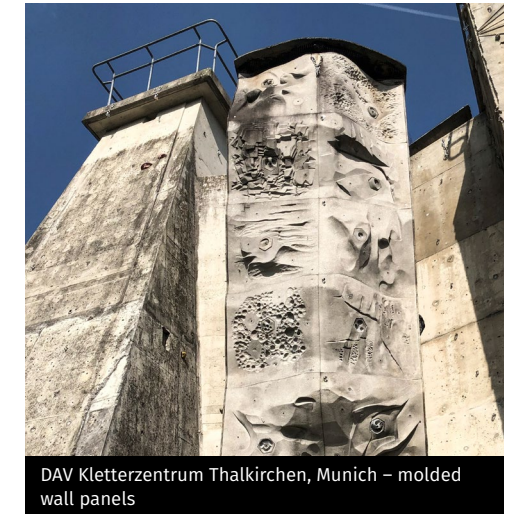
The first wave of modern plastic climbing holds began around 1985, though a few pioneers were playing with the concepts as early as 1980. These first holds, made around 1982/3 by **Dan Goodwin** in the USA and **François Savigny** in France, were not so different from the first holds made up through the mid-90s. All were early experiments by hold makers who were carving their own path in different countries, sometimes at the same time, but all without any real knowledge of what they were doing or how they should be doing it.

The path each followed was the same: carved wood holds, then experiments with epoxy and different polyester resins, normally with sand for texture. Masters were made of clay with texture added or other materials, molds were made of various plastics and rubbers, and many were one-offs. Later, foam was used for masters and silicone for molds, and some began using polyurethane for its desirable properties and/or its reduced toxicity.

Anderson's 1960s use of bolts was lost to obscurity, so the return to a bolt-on system required a second wave of invention. Screwing holds on and off was a natural attachment method; however, it was clearly not the best solution, as it was tedious and tore up walls over time. Construction connections from both Savigny in France and Goodwin in the US resulted in nearly the same solution, and both developed their own systems of bolts with receiving nuts. In France, Savigny's **Entre-prises** (EP) started with expanding concrete anchors as bolt receivers, then developed nutted wall panels after learning that customers wanted a better solution. In America, Goodwin, a contractor by trade, began



Insets were holds shaped to fit into recesses in the climbing wall. Some were hexagonal in shape, others were various-sized circles or ovals. Unused inset holds could be filled with blocking plates to match the wall. Single-bolt circles gave the most versatility, as the grab could be oriented in any direction.



molding receiver nuts into his modular fiberglass panels. This was the system he used to build the 1987 Snowbird Competition Wall (p 4) with his company **Sport Climbing Systems** (SCS). By the time he built that wall, he'd been building and showing various forms of artificial climbing walls at trade shows for over 6 years.

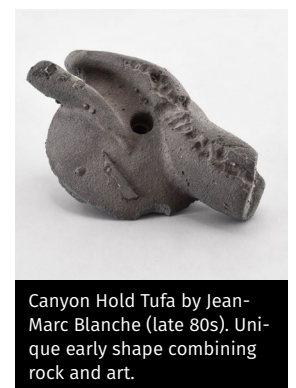
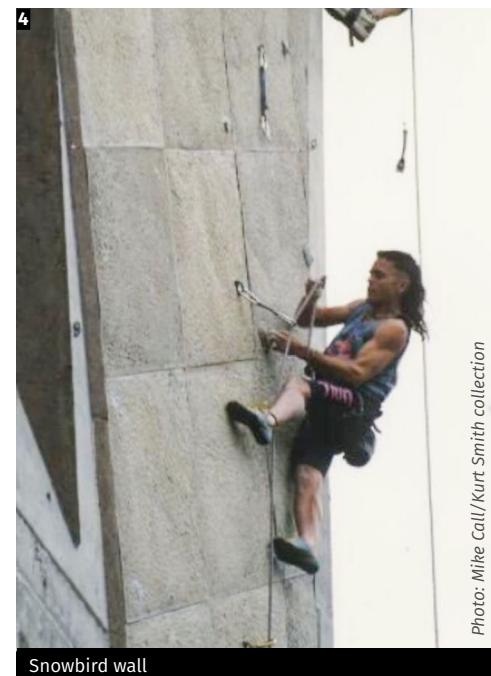
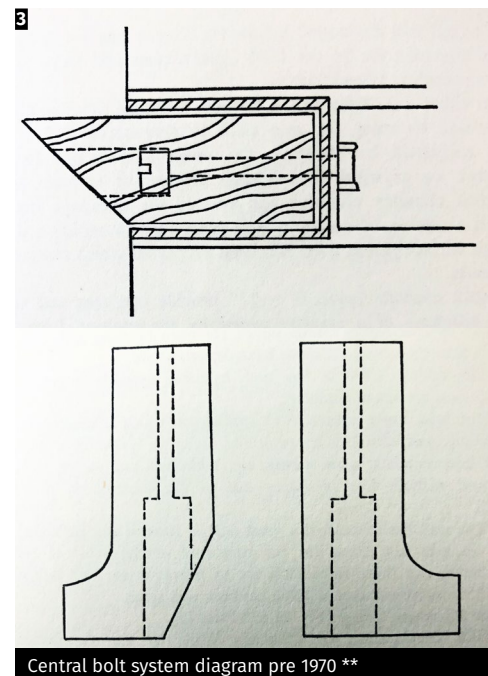
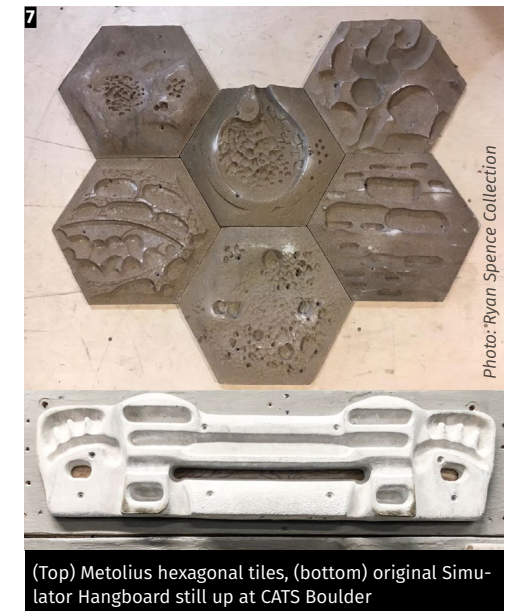
For holds and movable features, **EP** actually started with molded hexagonal tiles that could be moved or placed to build entire routes and to make the wall surface look like a climbing wall. Next, they made smaller insets and modular bolt-on holds. **SCS** experimented with different methods to make sand textured bolt-on holds of resin with fiberglass for strength. Slightly later, Austria's **Artrock** (1989) started with various-sized insets as a way to modify their walls and moved on to movable fiberglass features like a movable tufa that wraps an arête (p 5).

The Colorado Athletic Training Center (CATS), opened in Boulder in 1988, is a veritable living museum of climbing hold history. Owner **Rob Candelaria** explained that they started by epoxying rocks to the wall, then used lag bolts through holds into wood studs, then finally adopted t-nut technology. Candelaria credits **Jean-Marc Blanche** of **Canyon** holds with

teaching **Ramsey Thomas** how to make holds when he visited Boulder, and Thomas went on to make **Carp Holds** through his Metamorphosis Studio. Two years before CATS opened, Candelaria drilled up a butcher block into a hangable board he called **The Hueco Board**. He sold them for a while, but the cost of making them was more than people wanted to pay, so he gave it up (p 6).

Another American company, **Metolius**, was inspired by a hangboard they got at a European tradeshow in 1986, and began making their own holds, hexagonal tiles, and hangboards (p 7). In 1988, a few of their guys teamed up with EP to form EP USA, and the relationship continues to this day. Metolius has been a steady presence in the American hold market, from their athlete lines shaped by **Jim Karn** and **Scott Franklin** in the 90s to their focus on trying new things like their corner jibs, their current line of Inside-Outs holds where part of the hold is meant to fit through the wall like an inset and the other part stays on the outside, and their unique super thin CNC-cut anodized aluminum footholds (p 8).

Like EP and Artrock, most early hold companies were wall companies that needed a way for customers to modify their wall product.



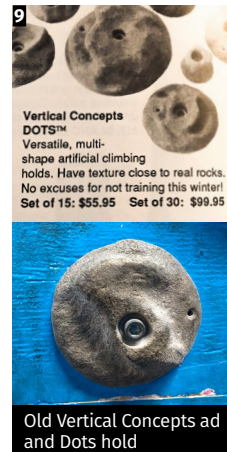
* Artificial Climbing Walls by Kim Meldrum & Brian Royle, photo by R. Holmes. Book copyright 1970 British Mountaineering Council used with permission - p41 fig 11
 ** Artificial Climbing Walls by Kim Meldrum & Brian Royle copyright 1970 British Mountaineering Council used with permission - p57 fig 19, 20



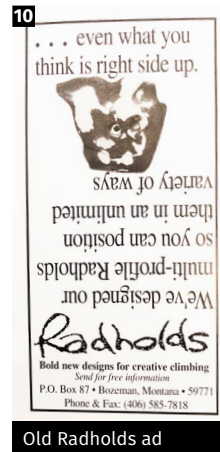
Permanent hold made in the early 90s by Mark English and friends at Rock City in Hull, UK

The Olmstead brothers' **Vertical Concepts**, located in Oregon near Metolius and Smith Rocks, made some of the first and most widely available early holds. Their shapes and walls were well-regarded, but due to unfortunate business circumstances they had to close in the early 90s (p 9).

In Northern California around that same time, **Wayne Campbell's Radwall** had an incredible coated-plywood gym-building system and also made their own holds called Radholds (p 10). Early shapes were carved by Yosemite legend **John "Yabo" Yablonski**. In the early 90s, a young **Ty Foose** began working for Radwall. He was inspired by Yabo's shaping because he made non-geologic, simple, directional shapes that were unlike all the rock copies the other companies were making. Yabo carved his shapes out of surfboard foam – a high-quality design foam very similar to what many companies still use today – and made reusable molds Radholds could pour over and over again. Foose's first hold was a wooden pocket he made with scraps and borrowed tools to set a move he wanted for Nationals at City Rock in Emeryville. After that, he sent a foam version of the pocket to Boulder, Colorado, to be poured by a unique new company called **Straight Up**. He made a set of holds for Radwall that were slippery on the sides – what we now call **Dual-Tex** – but



Old Vertical Concepts ad and Dots hold



Old Radholds ad

at the time, Foose called it Grip Differential. It was 1991 or 1992.

Straight Up was started in 1989 as Bolder Holds by longtime climber **Chas Fisher**. Fisher saw an opportunity after research of the US and Europe showed not many players in the hold market. Fisher developed his own methods of making, texturing, and molding holds, settling on aluminum oxide and varnish for his early texture and Vinylester for his material. He knew he didn't want rock-colored holds, so he decided not to go for rock-colored holds either, and he dyed his mix. Colorful, non-organic Bolder Holds were marked with an inset triangle and sent out into the market (p 11).

The Vinylester that Fisher started with was an incredible material that floated in water yet withstood sledgehammer blows, but its exothermic curing temperature was so high it kept destroying his molds. He was forced to switch to a more traditional polyester resin (PE) while he continued the search for the ultimate hold material. Other experiments involved fiberglass molding trays and silicone skin molds – methods still used today by some manufacturers, though for Fisher the amount of time it took to make small molds that way wasn't worth the trouble.

After a year, Fisher was tired of doing all the work himself. Around this same time, a young **Ian Powell** had returned from traveling in Europe with Team USA and landed in Boulder. Powell was raised an artist, though his only previous sculptural experience was a line of mortar holds he made on his mom's brick garden wall around 1989. It turned out his talent extended to shaping holds, and after making the dinosaur heads and other kids' holds Fisher needed, Powell was set free to make whatever he could think of. The first hold he made was a two-part pocket that could be rotated to change the usable grip (p 12). Fisher credits Powell with a huge growth period in Straight Up, saying Powell was the ringleader of trying new ideas and helping the company grow to thousands of holds by the time it closed in 1996.

Fisher and Powell worked with many of the who's-who of climbing at the time, including pro climbers like **Timy Fairfield** and **Tony Yaniro**. Both came to Straight Up with previous shaping experience and, even after the rest of the crew switched to high quality design foam, Yaniro preferred to shape in clay. His Yaniro Line (p 13) included smooth pinches, slopers, crimps, and some of the first and best two-finger pockets ever made, even to this day. He focused on the body mechanics of his holds, thinking of the edge radius and how it would feel at different wall angles. Fisher remembers that before Yaniro they hadn't really thought about comfort, but in addition to Yaniro's holds Powell picked up the concept quickly, and soon comfort was one of the main features of Straight Up's designs.

Getting away from design and material for a minute, it's worth mentioning that Straight Up did other things differently than previous companies as well – they created a culture around their holds. They started a hold-of-the-month club that had over 500 subscribers at one point. They sold tiny cheap Handies and Footsies and celebrated home walls with



Bolder Holds, Ryan Spence collection



Ian Powell's two-part stackable, changeable pocket

Photos: Ryan Spence Collection



Tony Yaniro holds

a "Show Us Your Woody" contest that gave away holds as prizes. Each order shipped with a 'zine called Grip, an irreverent publication born when some of their ads were deemed too racy for mainstream magazines. The ads that did make it in were focused on pop culture instead of the holds (p 14).

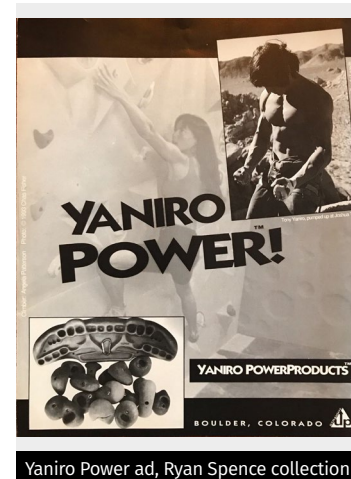
After Straight Up, Powell and Foose started a new company called **e-Grips**. The two shared a small studio where they lived, shaped, and poured holds in epoxy and PE. They believed a hold material existed that would be lighter, stronger, and less toxic to work with than PE, and began seeking out polyurethane (PU) manufacturers. They had a great polyurethane and sand mix early on, and Powell traveled to England with a duffel of holds to begin their "unbreakable" hold sales (p 15). Due to miscommunication with the hosting gym, the announcement went out that "A guy from the States is here with free holds", and Powell was quickly left without any product or money to show for it. One of the climbers in the gym that day was a young Englishman named **Daniel French**.

The company producing that unbreakable material left town, and Powell and Foose started over. Straight Up had once nearly teamed up with a PU skateboard wheel manufacturer, and e-Grips ended up finding a rollerblade wheel manufacturer nearby that was run by one of the world's leading experts on polyurethanes. His name was **Chuck Demerast**, and with him they developed an elastomeric polyurethane that is still used today by Aragon Elastomers to produce holds for many well-respected hold companies.

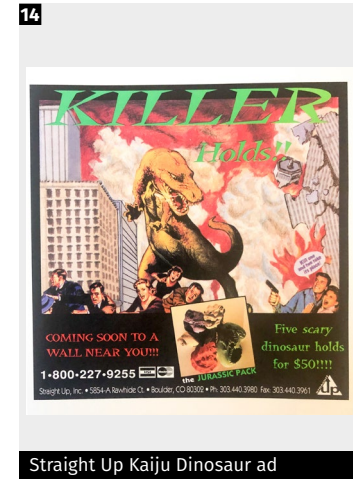
Foose and Powell sold e-Grips, then Foose ran an artificial rock wall company called Monolithic that made fantastic rock-like climbable sculptures for city parks and private owners. The Spot Gym (p 16) in Boulder was a t-nutted version of those carved concrete boulders, and though it opened in 2002, the novelty has not worn off, as the organic, outdoor-like walls provide a unique climbing experience not found in other gyms. Powell worked with Foose and had a successful but short-lived art career (this colorful story can be found with a quick internet search). Foose



Todd Skinner home wall and holds: crude homemade wooden pinch, multi-feature inset hueco, old homemade hollowback, and molded pinch



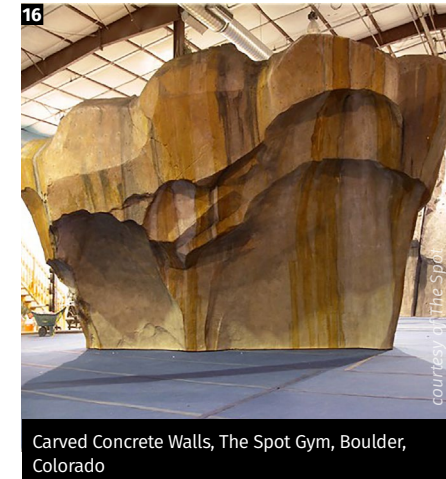
Yaniro Power ad, Ryan Spence collection



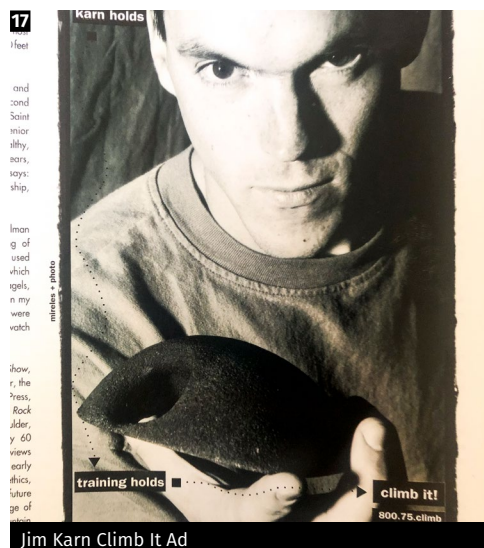
Straight Up Kaiju Dinosaur ad



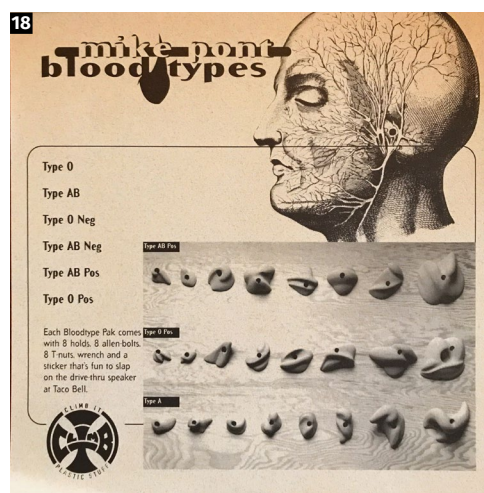
Original unbreakable e-Grip still used at the Castle as a demo hold. Note this pinch still has visible texture even though it is old PU



Carved Concrete Walls, The Spot Gym, Boulder, Colorado



Jim Karn Climbing Ad



Mike Pont Blood Types Climbing Ad
Ryan Spence Collection



Nate Postma's Nicos (1992) was an early company to focus on smooth texture for longer climbing sessions, and was also early with piggyback holds and fiberglass.

continued to shape for e-Grips, and in 2012 Powell made a few new sets as well. In 2013 Powell started a new company, **Kilter Grips**, and has quickly grown it to one of the largest lines of holds available, including a modular tufa system in which all the pieces fit together with a common connector, complex stacking holds where holds are designed to modify each other, and a light-up, adjustable training board designed for all abilities.

Back to 1990 in Southern California, another company with attitude started when two business students got investment funds for **Climb-It**. Famous climber **Jim Karn** (p 17) and route setter **Mike Pont** (p 18) shaped the first lines, and the businessmen arranged for professional marketing, complete with glossy embossed catalogs and their own 'zine sent out with orders. Within two years they were done with the climbing industry, seeing no money in it and selling everything to climber **Kevin Daniels**. Like Fisher in Boulder, Daniels lived at his studio and did nearly everything himself, later hiring others to help shape and pour, including Hidetaka Suzuki, Randy Leavitt, and the now prolific shaper **Louie Anderson**. Daniels poured in PE for years, but after a chemical fire he barely got a handle on, he switched to the much safer PU. By the early 2000s he was done breathing chemicals and sold the company to his friend and gym owner Zach Shields of the Hangar-18 chain.

Around 1992 in San Diego, CA, mechanical engineer **Frank Cornelius** was developing his own materials to start a hold brand called **VooDoo**. Shapers included the extremely talented and innovative **Rob Mulligan**. VooDoo were poured in polyurethane early on, with a thin layer of soft rubbery backing mate-



rial to prevent spinning. Their PU was so soft that often the bolt head would compress the washer down into the hold, leaving a gap, but it was so strong that the holds would continue to be usable for years even after that had happened. VooDoo was also early with hollow-backing and dual-tex, including their famous half-moon series of dual-tex Talus ledge holds (p 19). Their series tended to be unique, with various colors and a nice texture, and all sizes from tiny dual-tex dish feet to giant slopers and granite ledges. Some holds were so large they needed a second bolt, and VooDoo created a sliding bolt solution so those holds could be safely attached with two bolts and no screws. Their colors weren't quite a match for modern shades, but the material has proven to be one of the best hold materials ever made. Frank eventually moved on and his business partner continued with new manufacturing at Proxy, subsidiary of wall company Vertical Solutions, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.

Salt Lake City has tons of accessible outdoor climbing and has had a long history in the climbing industry. In 1994, local strongman



Dual-Tex, Diff-Tex, Grip Differential... making one part of a hold slippery to limit its use or for aesthetic reasons has been done in many ways. Early comes to the American market were Ty Foose with Radwall, then with e-Grips and So Cal's VooDoo holds. In Europe, Laurent Laporte made a dual-tex macro and jibs. Dan Goodwin even dual-texed parts of his early 80s holds, but just to show off the logo. Like the other innovations in this history, it seems dual-tex was developed repeatedly by different people in different places, all who noticed a common problem and devised a similar solution.



Dave Bell made the first **Pusher** holds for their training wall, The Body Shop. Soon, **Rob Gilbert**, **Boone Speed**, and **Mike Call** joined up and began making "always-friendly" holds – ergonomic shapes with good texture (p 20). Back then big holds were unusual, partially due to limitations in hold materials, but Pusher started making them anyway, starting with Bell's 2XL sloper, The Butt, and going on to Mike Call's giant 3XL Font Sloper, **The Boss**. The Boss was a huge hold, heavy, and not cheap, but gyms had to have it, and it remains iconic to this day.

Pusher was born of a punk rock attitude and they took many risks, especially with their advertising. One finally resulted in the copyright lawsuit that forced them to close. Early crashpad maker **Clark Shelk** (Cordless) took over, rebranded as Revolution, and produced classic shapes and some wonderful new ones including holds by **ETCH** shaper **Jason Kehl**, who later had his own label, **Cryptochild**, with brothers **Dan and Dave Chancellor** of **So Ill** (p 21). Shelk eventually quit the business, but in 2017 **Jared Roth** went back to the name



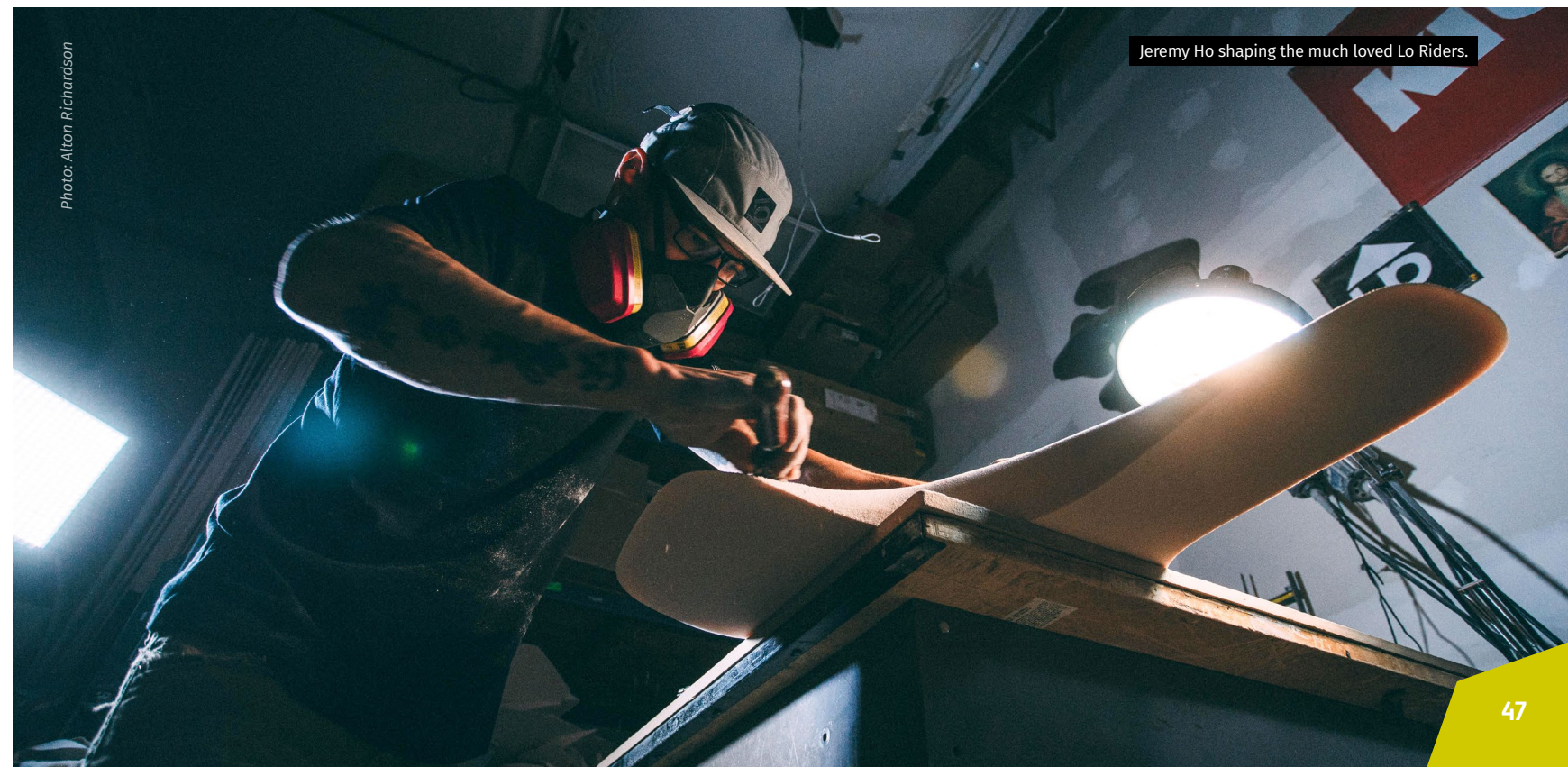
So Ill (2002) became known for their kooky shapes and colors including this reverse dual-tex crystal where the grabbable part of the hold had no texture. The brand has expanded to clothes, shoes, bags, and even climbing gyms.



Taijitu fiberglass macro (top) and modern fiberglass macro hollowback (bottom)

Pusher and revitalized the brand with new shapes to expand the classic series.

In 1990, a few years before Pusher got going, two very influential European shapers were just getting started. In France, **Laurent Laporte** had begun experimenting with making holds, trying different materials and shaping casually for comps and friends. In 2000 he launched as Amoeba, but in-house PE production proved prohibitive, so he sold most of his shapes to EP. In 2013 he founded **Cheeta** with his companion. Perhaps his most significant contribution in the first two decades was the **Taijitu** fiberglass macro (p 22) he shaped for EP one afternoon using his mother's tree stump and a chainsaw. The shape, a recognizable giant drop-dish also sometimes referred to as the pissoire, has remained iconic, and many of current fiberglass macros are still variations on this initial form. He says that climbing is based on touch and to create his dreams of specific movement in climbing he was early to experiment with comp-specific dual-tex jibs. Cheeta now produces PU holds, fiberglass macros, and wood volumes at sev-





Maker's Mark – Many shapers and companies marked their holds with a logo or maker's mark, like this mark that signifies shaper Rob Mulligan. Some companies make their logo gigantic, but new IFSC standards propose to limit logo size on holds and volumes for competition. Of course, brands not involved in these comps can make their logos as large as they want.

eral manufacturers. Laporte remains one of the IFSC's top setters and continues to design many holds, macros, and volumes, all based on his desire to keep shaping what he wants to set with.

The other key European shaper getting started in 1990 was Slovenian **Aljoša Grom**. In a few short years Grom went from making snowboards to making climbing holds to train on, though at the time in Slovenia, he was completely on his own for materials and techniques. At first he made wood and rock holds like most other early developers, then moved to glass plasticine for one-off molds that he'd fill with sand and polyester resin. He describes those early efforts as "really rough, not pleasant for hands", but they got the job done. Cleaning everything between molds was a lot of work, so eventually he found silicone for repeatable molds and floral foam for shaping masters. One of his first shapes was a heart, and even today, his company has an entire line of heart-shaped holds (p 23).

Back then Grom was competing and then setting comps, and he brought holds when he

traveled. Around 1998, he ran into a friend he'd known from the snowboarding business named **Jaka Schlamberger**. Schlamberger suggested they team up, and the brand **Lapis** was born. Schlamberger was business-minded, and after setting up production, began pushing sales and adding brands. Grom focused on shaping and setting events, drawing inspiration from the necessity to keep the competitors on their toes. He remembers the birth of volumes: "I think we were one of the first in the world at the Kranj competition to use wooden triangles. I never saw that before. Maybe it started when we were joking about putting a boat up on the wall to climb on."

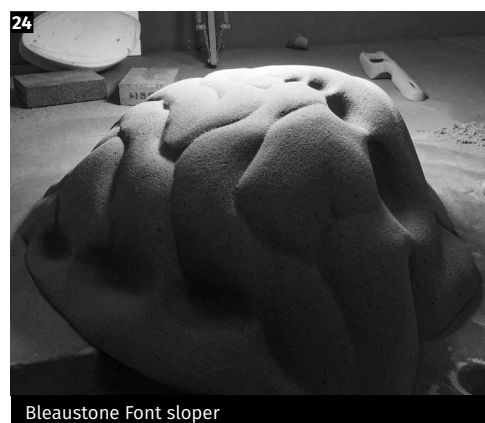
Grom and Schlamberger were eventually joined by Englishman **Lloyd Betsworth**, but not until Betsworth had gone through some experiments of his own. Betsworth started pouring holds in Sheffield, England, for a chemist, setter, and shaper named **Daniel French** in the late 90s. They poured PE for **French Rock** and also brands including **Holdz, DR, Livingstone, and Bendcrete**. Betsworth himself had some background in business, art, and materials science from university, and the two continued trying to develop better hold materials. One day, French asked him to carve a hold, and Betsworth, finding he was good at it, was inspired to start his own line of holds resembling his favorite features from Fontainebleau. Betsworth planned the line and registered the name **Bleaustone** (pic 24) in 2003, but before his first holds were out in 2005, French had moved to Bulgaria to start Composite-X, and Betsworth had teamed up with **Stephen Royle**.

French had been experimenting in holds since 1995, when he used a two-part araldite epoxy glue and sand to make his first shape. His father burned it in the oven, but French was not deterred and went on to make a range of hand-formed holds from epoxy resin electronics potting compound and sand. Next he made a mould from remeltable PVC, and used polyester resin and sand to make his first



Peter Juhl shaping Urban Plastix Not Fonts

sellable holds. In 1996, he started studying chemistry at the University of Sheffield, and by 1998, was making holds in a garage nearby. He carried on with PE until after Betsworth joined, then made his first PU hold – a fingerboard – in 2004. In 2005, he moved to Bulgaria to team up with Walltopia on a hold manufacturing facility called **Composite-X**. Through much trial and error and many materials, Composite-X finally developed the Danno-mond PU in 2016 that has made the facility among the top in the world for the quality of climbing holds it produces. This feat took years of testing, and along the way he mixed many mixes, analyzed many materials, built custom machinery, and created a custom testing lab including a smashing machine, temperature and impact testers, and a rubber-rubbing machine to simulate rapid repetitive climbing-shoe contact. He's made positive and negative texture holds in all colors and materials, with the goal of continuing to progress climbing hold technology. With the



Bleaustone Font sloper

ultra-thin, strong, and detailed holds Composite-X now makes, it certainly does feel like holds have taken a step forward with Danno-mond PU material.

Back to Betsworth – within a few years, Bleaustone was imploding due to creative differences with Royle. A 2008 factory fire effectively ended the business, and Royle started another company called **Core** with different partners. Betsworth took Bleaustone to Slovenia, where he'd been invited to work with Grom, Schlamberger, and their German partner, **Tom Brenzinger**. The move proved to be a good one for him, as he was able to keep shaping and help his new partners with development of materials, processes, and products, including a unique way to create high quality fiberglass volumes with climbing hold textures and colors. **Frank Bogerman** of **Axis Round Edges** has also joined, bringing his unique technologies and shapes into the fold. Known as the **Schlamberger Group**, they produce and sell PE holds, fiberglass macros, and textured wood volumes for eight different brands, and by turnover are one of the largest climbing hold manufacturers in the world.

Fiberglass Macro features are a very popular trend in climbing holds, thanks largely to Swiss manufacturer **Flathold** and their popular Superstar and Revival series of giant dishes and slopers. Laporte's Taijitu and other fiberglass options had long existed, but due perhaps to timing, perhaps to their elegant simplicity, Flathold's were the first to really catch on, and in a few short years, they

changed wallsapes from tiny jibs on wooden volumes to entire comps set with macro features.

In Bulgaria, just an hour from Walltopia in Veliko Tarnovo, those famous macros are manufactured for Flathold, along with shapes for So Ill and other brands, by a wood, fiberglass, and PE hold, macro, volume and wall company called **X-Cult**. Owned and run by sculptor **Iliyan Mihaylov**, X-Cult's most famous holds are the macros and dual-tex they've made for other companies. In recent years, their distribution has picked up, and X-Cult is becoming more well-known on the market for their own unique and innovative shapes, including crazy macros and slick dual-tex volumes.

Speaking of changing the wallscape, since they launched in 2014, Slovenian brand **360's** macros and truly gigantic fiberglass volumes have been widely distributed around the world, helping normalize the use of outrageous amounts of money and wall space for just one route. The aesthetic has proven appealing enough that, despite the expense, routes set entirely of massive features can regularly be seen in comp and gym photos.

Asia and Australia got to the game late in terms of holds and volumes, though the explosion of gyms and high population areas makes them great markets and melting pots for new ideas. A few quick mentions are the now-defunct **Godhand** holds, which had some truly original shapes, and **Under Blue Hold**,



Iconic Flathold fiberglass macros (yellow)

which made perhaps the first polished wood with colored texture holds – they even made volumes with artificial turf on one side! In China, **Gecko King** has built everything themselves, and World Cup events there are often unique, with patterned walls and completely new holds, macros, and volumes. In Australia most holds are imported, though there are a few home-grown brands making a go of it, including **William Watkins** with **Unleashed**. Brands of all sorts are being born in this area of the world; it bears watching as indoor climbing continues to evolve.



Lapis Heart holds – old and new

PE vs PU - Polyester (PE) has been in use for holds far longer and is still considered a superior material in some parts of the world, as proponents say it holds texture longer, stays cool to the touch, and can withstand exposure to weather. PE feels like rock, and is heavy like rock. It is also somewhat fragile in that it chips or cracks if thin, so PE shapes must be blobby to reduce breakage. Even then, holds can break in half if the wall is uneven, causing some manufacturers to design in-hold safety mechanisms like metal springs to help "grab" the broken material and keep pieces of broken rock from falling out of the sky. The other main hold material option, polyurethane (PU), is stronger and more flexible than PE, meaning holds can be shaped with a more pleasing, directional taper, be thinly hollowbacked, thus very light, and can be used on uneven walls. PU had a long development period in some markets, so there are many bad PUs out there with various issues, including breakage from being overly soft, chipping like PE, and polishing. Opponents believe even good PU heats up after repeated use and polishes faster than PE, though the particular kind of PU used is certainly a factor in both these charges. At the moment, many Europeans still prefer PE, and North Americans tend to prefer PU. This debate will undoubtedly continue for years to come.



Classic Teknik feature hold in PE from 2003 in pink. You can see how the edges are chipped. New PU Teknik in blue. Teknik, much beloved for their simple, useful shapes, started by pouring their own resin, but later switched to Aragon PU. Many of their more recent shapes demonstrate the capabilities of PU.



Tons of Teknik PE holds curing in their workshop (mid-2000s)



Modern PU hollowbacks

And what does the future of holds hold?

The 2020 Olympics should serve to accelerate the growth of indoor climbing for competition, recreation, and fitness. Some people may see this as a bad thing, but with growth comes more money, with money comes development, and with development can come ways to improve the industry and its practices.

Now that there are several major professional hold manufacturers, color standardization is getting better, and gyms can now closely match holds and even macros and volumes between brands. Eventually, with current materials or new materials, this color matching will be identical. New materials, perhaps stronger, lighter, or more sustainable, may eventually supplant the old standbys of PE, PU, wood and fiberglass. Technologies like digital design, 3D scanning, 3D printing, and CNC carving will be applied to hold design, molding, and production (p 25). These meth-

ods are entering the market already; for example, British wooden hangboard company **Beastmaker** now sells digitally-designed aluminum board feet (p 26). Several companies are 3D-scanning rock, meaning that, one day, climbers may be able to walk into a gym in Singapore and climb a perfect replica of a classic outdoor boulder from France, with adjustable walls to recreate the angles and printed copies of the exact outdoor holds to pull on (p 27).

We're not quite there yet, though. So far, no technology-based method has been found that is vastly better than good old-fashioned foam carving and molding. Walls can move, but not in the simple, magnificent way we imagine angles will morph in the future. All existing technology methods are expensive, time consuming, imperfect and imprecise. That said, the world is changing quickly, and as technology advances, many technologies from other industries can and will be adopted

by the climbing hold industry, when the timing and cost are right. What this means is that, in the near future, the visionaries of our sport may well see their dreams realized in real time on the walls of tomorrow.



Several companies are now making these beautiful wooden shapes with colored, textured sections to set alongside plastic holds.



25 Brian Meuse 3D designed and printed the master for this hold, then molded it to make repeatable copies in plastic (USA 2013/2014).



26 The aluminum foot made by Beastmaker for board training has a unique design to create friction, even though the material is smooth.



27 Element Earth in Colorado is one of several new brands scanning real rock holds and recreating them in plastic to bring the outdoors in!

Jackie Hueftle has been climbing and setting since 1998, when she got her start at Rocksport in Reno, Nevada. Designed by Christian Griffith and built by Radwall, the flat textured walls with flush, bomber t-nuts and occasional natural features were a perfect place to learn to set routes. Many of the staple holds she learned with were made by companies featured in this article. She remembers once paying a past due Pusher bill when her boss was out of town, just so the gym could order new holds again.

with the Routesetting Institute, occasionally writes for magazines, and works on The Climbing Hold Museum project. See her on Instagram @thegirlinlongshorts

The Climbing Hold Museum: Jackie has been collecting holds, photos, and information for her Hold Museum Project. To contribute, please email her: climbingholdmuseum@gmail.com.

Jackie competed for the US Junior World Team in 2001, spent several years focused on climbing outdoors and setting competitions, then settled at The Spot in Boulder. She was Head Setter until 2017, when Kilter needed her full time. When she's not at Kilter (ha!), she goes climbing, consults, sets, and teaches clinics

JACKIE HUEFTLE

Born: 1982

Lives in: Boulder, Colorado, USA

Background: Route setter, setting instructor at the Routesetting Institute, co-owner of Kilter Grips



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SETTING THE OLYMPICS: QUESTIONS (UN)ANSWERED

COMMENTARY

TEXT & PHOTOS: LIAM LONSDALE

◆ *There has been much debate about the involvement of climbing in the Olympics – more questions and arguments than can be succinctly summarised in this introduction. Today, regardless of your stance on the matter, climbing is in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, which are just a few months away. Whilst its inclusion is a certainty, there are still several questions surrounding what is easily the most important element, other than which athletes will be there, and that of course is ... the route setting.*

Arguably, this is one of the most hotly anticipated competitive events that climbing has ever (and possibly will ever) witness, and in an attempt to try and unpack some of the biggest questions around it, I wrote this article. Not because I have all the answers – on the contrary, because, like you, I am curious, too.

FIRST UP, WHO?

Well, we know for sure that there are various 'nomination criteria' that all IFSC Officials must meet, route setters included, to be considered for the Tokyo 2020 games. The IFSC Executive Board (EB) released a document detailing the criteria. Amongst other things, any selected route setter must have 'a positive outcome of the yearly assessment'. Put simply, this is an ongoing review of performance led by the Director of the Route Setters Commission, Percy Bishton. It's open to interpretation, but we can say that a route setter must have delivered some excellent work over the previous season, and that his/her peers agree that it was good. To have been reviewed, a route setter must have set at a World Cup in the past season. Given that information, to be selected for the 2020 team,

the route setter must also be on the IFSC 'active' list. Inclusion on this list requires a route setter to be nominated by the IFSC, and to have successfully set at a minimum of two World Cups in a season. Currently, there are 28 'Chief' setters and 4 'Junior' setters.

So let's talk about some names. There is *unconfirmed* information in public circulation to suggest that the bouldering setting team will be led by IFSC Chief Route Setter, Manu Hassler (SUI), and the lead setting team will be led by IFSC Chief Route Setter, Adam Pustelnik (POL). Both are highly experienced, deeply respected, and very capable professionals. The tally of World Cup and World Championship events between them is impressive, to say the least. I might add that you will be hard-pressed to find anything published anywhere on this topic yet, and I

am yet to speak to anyone who is willing to go on record to discuss the names further. To be clear, my inclusion of names is purely speculative. However, to further cement the theory, both Pustelnik and Hassler were designated Head Setters of the first Olympic qualifying event in Hachioji Japan this year, and both will be the Head Setters for the Olympic qualifying event in Toulouse at the end of the year. Both occasions present perfect opportunities to perfect what the setting for a top-end, combined format competition should feel like. Ultimately, the responsibility for the final decision on those names falls to IFSC President Marco Scolari, IFSC Sport Director Silvia Verdolini, and IFSC Vice President of Sport/Events Kobinata Toru. If Hassler and Pustelnik do end up being the names on the list, you heard it here first. Maybe.

Additionally, there is discussion about who will complete the teams working with Manu and Adam. This decision is made by the Sport Director and Vice President of Sport/Events, undoubtedly with input from Percy Bishton. A standard IFSC route setting team has one Chief, plus two route setters, and sometimes a fourth is added for bigger events. Again, they must be selected from that same pool of active route setters. In the interests of fairness and diversity, it is important that as many continents are represented in the teams as possible, and similarly, that both genders are represented. Diversity is something that is worryingly lacking in the group (the reasons why, and a breakdown of this issue, is another article in itself). The bias is heavily European and heavily male, with only 2 females in the 'active' group and only 5 that are from either the regions of Asia or Pan-Am.

My first instinct would be to include Katja Vidmar (SLO) in bouldering. She has been a consistent setter on the circuit over the past couple of years and has proven that she is easily capable of being on the list. I feel that, with such a highly rated female setter in the mix, it would be a huge mistake not to include her. In lead, the choice of women is somewhat narrower. Helene Janicot (FRA), an IFSC Junior Route Setter, is a relative youngster at 25 years old (youth being another thing the group is generally lacking). After being named as a member of the route setting team in Japan for the Lead World Cup, I would say she is a solid bet, however, it was her only event of the season, and so it is possible her lack of a 'second competition' removes her from being eligible.

Outside of Europe, representation of the Asian continent falls to a choice of 3. The top pick on my list would be Gen Hirashima (JPN), the only IFSC route setter to have set 3 competitions during 2019, other than Pustelnik or Hassler. Perhaps choosing a setter with little chance of a fellow countrymen qualifying opens less opportunity for controversy, too. Artemis Farshad Yeganeh (IRI), an IFSC Junior Route Setter, is the only setter left in the entire pool that doesn't have an athlete representing his country, and at this stage it's looking unlikely that an Iranian athlete will qualify. After that, it's tough to call. The only Pan-Am representative, a name that I wouldn't hesitate to include would be Chris Danielson (USA). A talented and well known setter and shaper, Danielson has set at two World Cup events in 2019, and is strongly connected to Hassler through the company Flathold. Is it enough to see him on the Tokyo list? One should not overlook the "IFSC effect", either. There could be at least one more French name on the list, and a strong possibility of an Italian too, just... because.

THEN COMES THE 'WHAT?'

Once the route setters themselves have been decided, the next big question is, "what will they be putting on the walls in Tokyo?" We know that the walls themselves will be built by French manufacture Entre-Prises (EP). Other than that, information is limited, again.

Rewind to 2018, the IFSC announced that any hold companies wishing to be considered for selection and use at Tokyo 2020 would have to be registered in the IFSC Sport Catalogue

"THE OLYMPICS IS NOT JUST AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEEK THE EXCELLENCE OF OUR ATHLETES ON THE DAY; WE ARE TRULY EXPECTING OUR ROUTE SETTERS TO DISPLAY THE VERY BEST OF THEIR CRAFT, TOO."

of 2019. According to the IFSC, it is an "initiative which aims to make the playing field fairer across international IFSC events". This will also be the case for all IFSC events outside of the Olympics in 2020. Brands wishing to be included in the catalogue are reported to have paid in the region of \$5,000 for the privilege.

When it comes to a World Cup event, the responsibility of choosing the hold brands falls on the local organisers, usually in conjunction with the route setters. The IFSC recommends a minimum of three to four brands from the pool, which contains around 25 different brands across the categories of holds, macros, and volumes. They have suggested that the same be the case for the Olympics. One slight difference is that, for Tokyo 2020, there will be 1,000 shapes selected from the brands within the catalogue, and no more. Those 1,000 shapes will be the Olympic set. Who will decide on the final set? Honestly, we don't know ... and the IFSC isn't ready to tell us. Whoever it is, let's hope they choose well!

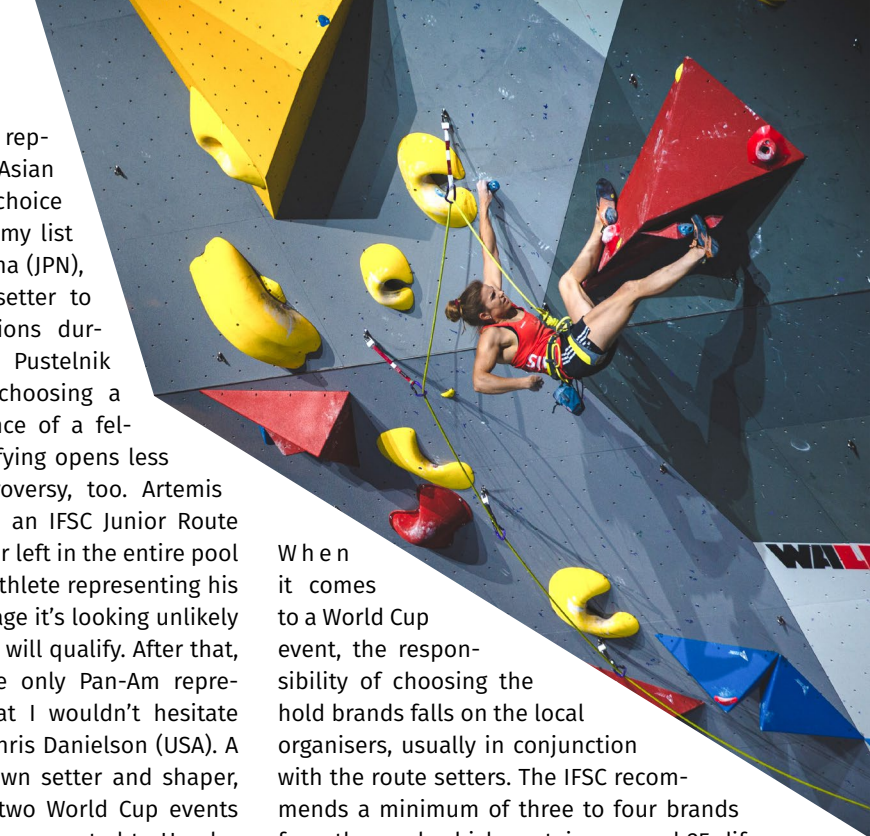
An interesting twist to the hold selection question is also that many of the route setters on the 'active' list either own, are shapers for, and/or are major stakeholders in some of the biggest hold companies in the business. It's possible that the route setters in attendance will be able to have their own brands represented. And why not? After all, few people know the holds better than the folks who created them!

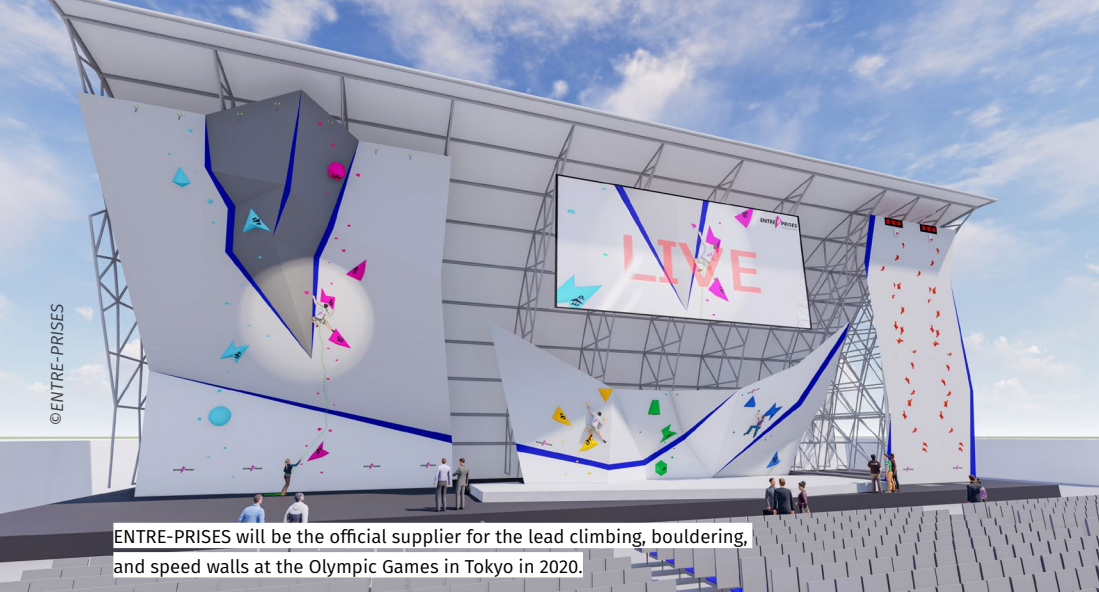
IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THERE MIGHT BE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST?

Honestly, I just want to get this one out of the way. It's about to get controversial, and

whilst I don't necessarily believe that any of the to-be-mentioned will occur in relation to 2020, it simply has to be brought up in a discussion about route setting for the biggest climbing competition we will have ever had.

It's no secret that in 2016, the French climbing team had training camps in the weeks leading up to the Paris 2016 World Champi-





ENTRE-PRISES will be the official supplier for the lead climbing, bouldering, and speed walls at the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020.

onships. Training camps that were delivered by some of the same route setters that were setting for the World Championships just a few weeks later. Training camps that coincidentally (or not, as the case may be) climbed on very similar, if not identical holds to the ones that then featured in the actual competition. Two years later, Innsbruck hosted the 2018 World Championship, before which the Austrian team were allowed exclusive 'closed doors' training sessions in the days before the competition began on the actual competition structure, inside the actual competition venue. As for holds/setters, I never managed to acquire that information, but they certainly followed the precedent set by their French counterparts.

On top of this, many of the top route setters in the business, the very same route setters that are listed on the IFSC 'active' list, are highly active within their own federations. It must be said that without the cooperation of their federations, it is highly unlikely that they would've gotten to where they are as setters in the first place; the ladder to becoming an IFSC route setter begins at local level federation competitions, followed by national level competitions. It is commonplace for those setters to be employed by the federations to work on training camps, creating mock competition boulders, setting blocs and routes for the teams. I know for a fact that some setters in the 'active' pool have actively stepped away from this kind of work in the last year

ahead of the World Championship events of 2019 and before Tokyo 2020. Hats off to those setters.

Before I move on from this one I want to be clear: I am not accusing anyone of cheating. Do I think that federations and teams have over-exercised their 'organiser privilege' in the past? Quite possibly, yes. Nevertheless, it happened, and nobody was really objecting to it. Certainly nobody was punished for it. Do I think we will see more activities like this in the run-up to 2020? Almost certainly, but to a different degree. I believe that it is in the best interest of the IFSC to name the route setting team sooner rather than later to rule out any opportunities for bending the rules. If we know now who the 2020 team is, measures can be taken to ensure they remain neutral. I imagine that the remaining 'active' setters that aren't selected will be drafted in by the Olympic-qualified teams and federations to ensure that their athletes are training on the highest standard of boulders and routes ... and I would hope that the setters that are selected for Tokyo show the integrity and a respect for fair play in our sport that we all expect, and stay well away from such practices.

WHAT ABOUT THE PRESSURE ...

As Champion Swimmer, Dawn Fraser said, **"The Olympics remain the most compelling search**

for excellence that exists in sport, and maybe in life itself." In my opinion, this is where climbing really becomes unique amongst all other Olympic sports. The 400m track, the gymnastics apparatus, the velodrome, the pools. They are all fundamentally the same wherever an athlete goes, even if there are some small variables. They affect everyone in the same way: the 'search for excellence' falls on the athlete.

As climbers, and importantly, as route setters, that's when we really come into our own. One miscalculated move can render an athlete useless. Or for a champion, as we all know, what can be totally unachievable for one body type can be too easy for another. The Olympics is not just an opportunity to seek the excellence of our athletes on the day; we are truly expecting our route setters to display the very best of their craft, too. This is high stakes route setting. There is no escape. And as route setters, we all know, people LOVE to blame us.

In researching this article, one IFSC Chief Route Setter told me that "the pressure of Tokyo 2020 will stifle the majority of setter creativity during the competition. The risk is simply too high to make even the smallest setting mistake". Although they often hide behind their unkempt appearances, limp rolled cigarettes and nonchalant attitudes, any international setter that tells you that they don't care is a liar.

Our route setters must create a show that is exciting for a brand new global audience, tens of millions of people that will be all-eyes on climbing for the first time. Simultaneously, they must craft routes that the athletes can really get their teeth into, and create moves that inspire the performance of a lifetime, arguably on the greatest stage of all.

Speaking of pressure, and to lighten the mood a little, let's talk about atmospheric pressure, or more broadly speaking:



"TENS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WILL BE ALL-EYES ON CLIMBING FOR THE FIRST TIME."

THE CONDITIONS

We all know how condition-dependent the routes we set can become. It's just the way it is. How many times have we dry-fired off hot PU? Too many. *Sorry customers, the holds look cool, and they're so much lighter to lift ... get over it.*

If we throw the conditions into consideration for the Olympics and add another variable into the mix ... things really do step up another notch for the route setting team. Here is what we know: the climbing venue for the games is going to be outdoors. That means no air conditioning. Hopefully it will mean a cool breeze and good temperatures, right? Wrong. The particular area where the lead, bouldering and speed will be held is known for being incredibly hot around July and August, aka Olympic time. Temperatures will be upwards of 30°C/85°F and incredibly humid to boot. We are talking in the region of at least 75%, sometimes even into the 80's. We aren't talking "oooh it's a bit warm" hot, no. More like, "f**k, I'm going to die trying to climb this" hot. Hot.

And as route setters, this must be accommodated for. I've seen it go wrong in gyms countless times; setting in a cold hall before a few hundred customers show up, the holds can feel GREAT.

A few hours later, lots of body heat, some additional chalk and a lot of hot air from people, and they feel impossible. I've seen it go wrong at big events, too. The kind with massive organisational infrastructure. It is not uncommon to have to set the boulders off-site, simply because accessing the field of play beforehand is impractical/impossible. It was a big problem in India back in 2016, for example. Even differences in the level of air conditioning in a venue can have big effects on the athletes' performance. Setting in any-

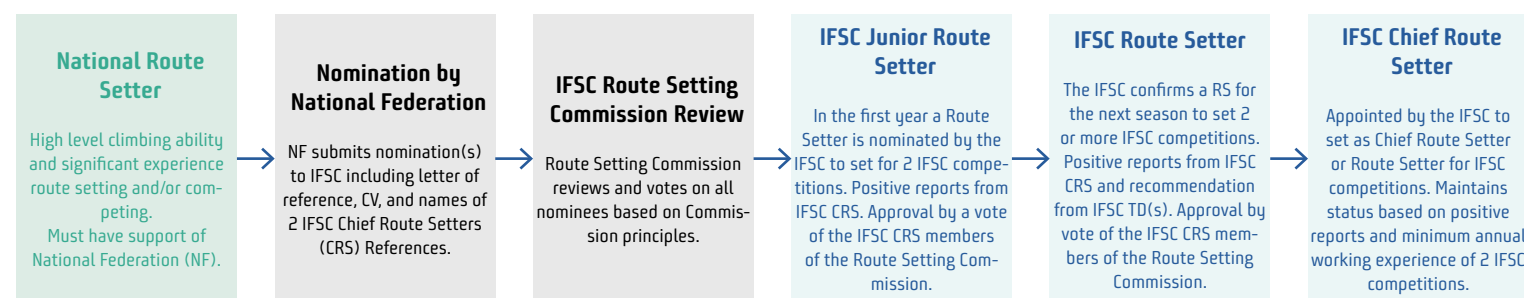
thing other than the same conditions is going to be incredibly challenging for the team in Tokyo.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Over the past months, I have spoken to many of the best route setters and athletes on the circuit, I have hosted panel talks and discussions, I have even tried to have meaningful conversations with officials at the IFSC. During that process, I was met with many (read: most) officials and setters who were unwilling to go on the record for worry of jeopardising their chances of being selected, or just for fear of being axed altogether; athletes who didn't want to be named so as not to incriminate themselves with their federations. It seems with inclusion in the games that, more than ever, people are looking over their shoulders. And I, for one, don't like that one bit. In fact, for me, it contradicts the very spirit of the climbing community that I know and love.

Nevertheless, as more information comes to light, and more announcements are made in the run-up to the games, we will be able to scrutinise the process, grow our collective knowledge, and further apply our thoughts and opinions. After all, if this isn't one of the greatest opportunities for competition climbing to grow and take itself to the 'next level', then I don't know what is.

Ultimately, the chosen few, whoever they are, will combine everything that they have learned so far as climbers and route setters – every standard that we have set as a community, every move that we have created and shared, the techniques that we have developed – and they will orchestrate what is likely to be the most significant exhibition of our trade in its history... and I'm not talking about the speed climbing.



IFSC Route Setters Career Path
Source: IFSC Officials Nomination Guidelines & Career Paths (https://www.ifsc-climbing.org/images/ifsc/Footer/Officials/181116_OfficialsGuidelines_Final.pdf)

Liam Lonsdale has been route setting professionally since 2008. Originally from the North of England, he has worked in gyms creating lead routes and boulder problems in the UK and Europe, as well as setting at several competitions.

A passionate climber, Liam splits his working hours between presenting and commentating at climbing events, and working as a photographer, shooting with many high-profile athletes and for commercial clients across the globe.

To find out more about Liam, visit www.liamlonsdale.com or check out @liamlonsdale on social media channels.



LIAM LONSDALE

Born: 1989

Lives: San Francisco

Background: Photographer, presenter, professional route setter

HOW TO SET A BOULDER

A COMMERCIAL SETTING WORKFLOW

TEXT & PHOTOS: NIKI WIECHMANN

◆ **Welcome to my mindset and my workflow for setting. In this article, I'll try to organize my thoughts and take you through the process I followed to set this boulder problem a couple of weeks ago.**

Setting a boulder or a route always happens within certain parameters:

SAFETY

You should be safe every time you step on a ladder, attach a hold to a wall or lift a heavy volume. It is the responsibility of every head setter to provide a safe and well-organized working environment. Wearing personal protective equipment, keeping the mats clear of screws and bolts and ensuring the setting area is clutter-free are all important. While

testing a climb, make sure you don't leave any objects in the fall zone or on top of ladders. Take care of yourself and if you're injured or exhausted, ask someone in your team to help you.

Safety also means that your climb should be safe for customers! This means no downward dynos, or crazy runners at a height of three meters, and so on. What constitutes a safe climb and at which grade you can start to tackle risky and dynamic moves are other topics altogether, and ones which I won't cover today. Easier climbs should not go all the way to the top of the wall, because inexperienced climbers are not used to falling from great heights. Never forget your down-climbing holds; if your gym doesn't own any, address this issue with your head setter. It's important for customers and can take a lot of pressure off you.

FUN

Your boulder should be fun and setting it should be fun as well. Of course, the concept of "fun" is relative and subjective, but the trick is to try and imagine yourself as a climber trying out your climb – is it a fun climb to attempt over and over again? Can you learn something from it? Or is it painful or dangerous? If so, it's time to look at how you can change it for the better. If the theme and style of the boulder is painful or dangerous, it might not be particularly well suited to indoor climbing.

GRADING

Although I don't pay much attention to grades, every gym should have at least a rough set of

difficulty guidelines. These might be V grades, colored circuits with Fontainebleau grading or, as I prefer, simple numbered levels. Your boulder always has to fit into a particular grading system. Most of the time, the head setter will let you know at what level to set and where, but if you're ever unsure, don't hesitate to ask!

CASE STUDY: MY BOULDER PROBLEM

Keeping all these factors in mind, we are ready to start setting. Before I start, I take a look at the wall and the wall angles. I try to use the wall angles to my advantage and create a feeling or situation that is only possible due to the angle. If you have an arête, let climbers get to know the barndoor and experience the sensation of clinging onto this open feature, going around it and smearing their foot into

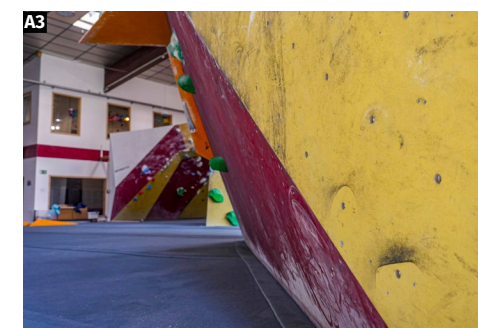
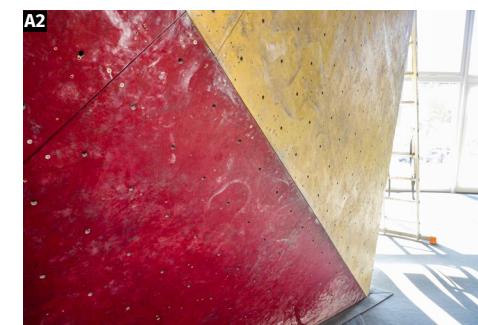
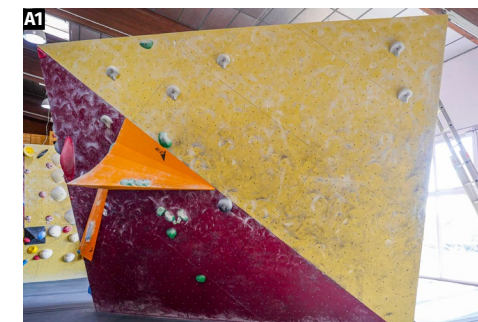
"I TRY TO USE THE WALL ANGLES TO MY ADVANTAGE AND CREATE A FEELING OR SITUATION THAT IS ONLY POSSIBLE DUE TO THE ANGLE."

it. Accepting the feature as your friend makes it easier to think up ideas and more exciting to create something remarkable out of it. You might find it easier to get inspired by holds instead of wall angles, in which case just go ahead and pick a good set. I picked huge yellow Squadra volumes because I wanted to construct something tricky for the feet underneath the lip of the wall.

PHASE 1: PREPARATION AND IMAGINATION

Setting the template: heart / core / crux

A - My aim was to set a medium to hard boulder with a complex "Tricky Niki" move at the start. The gym where I set this boulder uses colored start tags to indicate the difficulty, so I was free to use any color holds I wanted and it didn't matter if this boulder ended up too hard or too easy. The lower red part of the wall is steeper than the yellow part. You could stand on some of the yellow shapes without using your hands if they were placed on the steeper red part without the addition of another hand or foot hold, which made it quite a bit harder.

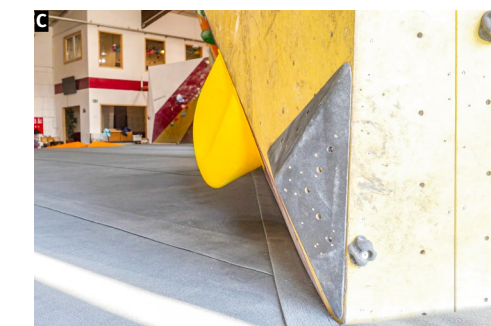


B - This was to be my core move: I wanted to somehow create the effect of standing on top of the dish with my left foot, but being forced by the steep wall angle to move to the left with my left hand and control the swing with a toe-hook on the right side. This created a bit of complexity for what was seemingly a simple move.

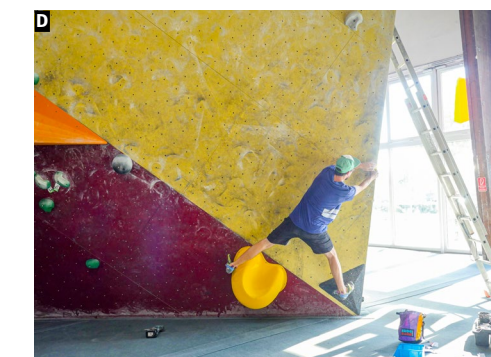


C - Coming from the right side, I needed a starting foot. I chose a volume with a sloping profile that didn't stick out too far. Due to the combination of the volume and the Squadra hold, I had to start with a toe-hook behind the yellow dish to keep me on the wall. It's easy to see here that the yellow dish offers a big surface to stand on, but it is actually impossible

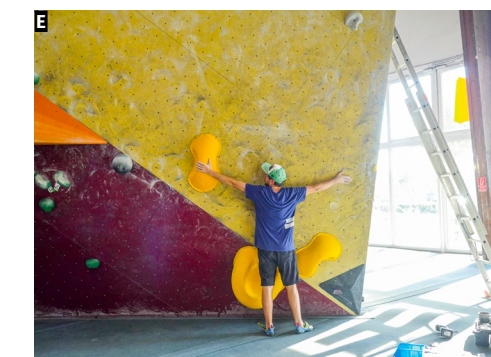
to stand on it without another hand or foot. If it had been possible to stand on the Squadra, I would have tweaked this hold immediately, perhaps replacing it with a smaller hold with less depth or moving it underneath the lip so it didn't jut out as much. Depth is one of the most important parameters to play with every time you set.



D - The starting position was established as follows: both hands start on the arête (marked by some screw-ons I added). Your center of gravity pulls you to the right, so you need to use a toe or heel-hook on the left yellow dish to control the start position. If you don't find this position, your body will swing off the wall.



E - To move left from here, I tried to measure how far left we would need to move away from the arête to make it impossible to span the two holds at once, as my plan was to force the climber to execute the move I had in mind.



F - I added another volume to be used for a toe-hook for the second part of the move. I had now established the primary and sec-

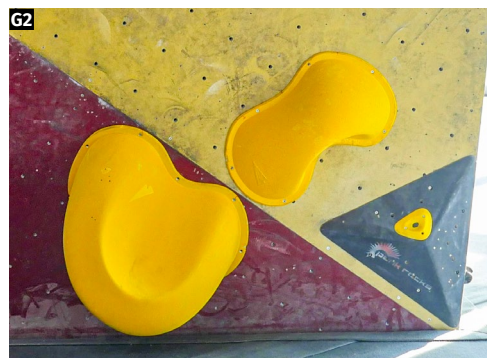
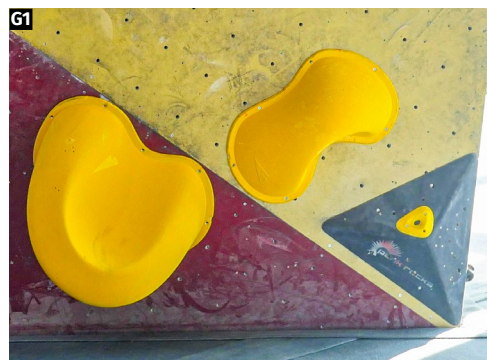
ondary positioning of my opening move for the boulder. I quickly scoped out the primary position and determined whether I could move left at all. After that, I felt the secondary position and identified whether it was possible to end up in this position.



G - Between these pictures, I attempted the move several times. I felt that the left starting foot was too high and too far left, so I moved it slightly closer. This made it easier to execute the move and step onto the hold in order to reach the left side-pull.

A small tip: When tweaking a position, try to change just one hold at a time. If you move too many holds at the same time, you won't know which change has affected the boulder in what way.

I also added a screw-on to the volume to make it easier to launch. Though it would also have been possible without a screw-on, why make it any harder than it needs to be? The starting position should be as comfortable as possible in order to encourage customers to keep attempting the boulder. Also, a blank



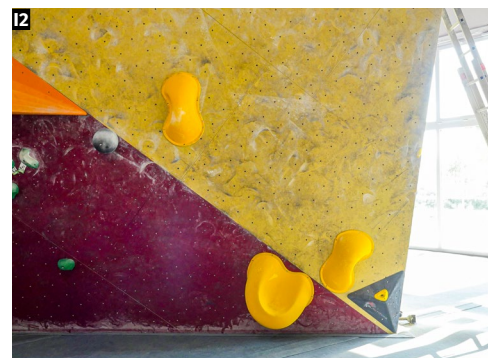
volume creates more issues when it comes to maintaining friction and accessibility, among other things. That being said, if this was a competition boulder, it would have been a great tweak to discuss... maybe another time!

H - Keeping the added footer in mind, I tested the reach again and determined whether it would be possible to span the move. Perhaps a taller climber would manage it, but it would also be more uncomfortable to reach from the undercling. (Afterwards, I observed the boulder for a few days and didn't see anyone manage to span or climb it any differently.)



THE TWEAKS

I - I moved the side-pull higher and further left to arrive in a more stretched position (it's easier to apply tension and pressure if your hands and feet are further apart, especially when toe-hooking). I also rotated the toe-hook counter-clockwise to make the toe-hook catch easier to achieve. It created the effect of having a side-pull instead of an undercling, only it had to be caught by your foot rather than your hand.



"WHEN TWEAKING A POSITION, TRY TO CHANGE JUST ONE HOLD AT A TIME."

THE HOLDS

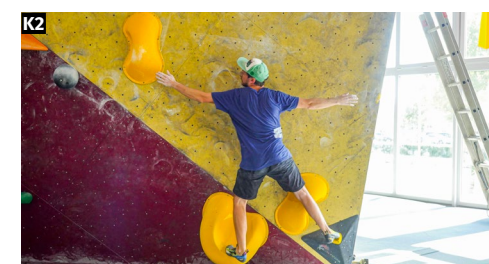
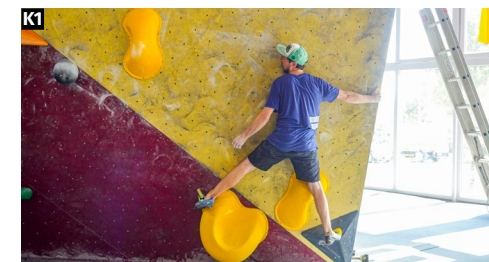
J - If the move itself works, you can always try making the holds more challenging to increase the difficulty, but personally, I believe the core move should not lose any attraction or beauty as a consequence. As you can see, I picked the most positive holds for the side-pull and the toe-hook. The side-pull could have been made much worse, but given the added complexity of the toe-hook catch, I decided the boulder was challenging enough from a commercial point of view.



THE MOVE

K - After making these subtle tweaks, it was time to test the move. I started the boulder again, with the toe-hook on the left keeping me on the wall. To generate the momentum I needed, I started with my hip far away from the wall. When I moved my hip towards the wall, I was able to release my left foot from its toe-hook position and step on top of the dish. Using the momentum generated from my hip and pushing at the same time from my right foot, my body moved to the left and I was able to reach the left side-pull. My center of gravity meant I couldn't stand on the big dish without implementing a toe-hook move. This required a lot of movement for such a small space - swinging in, stepping with my left foot on top, catching my left hand and then catching my right foot!

Combining so many small hand/foot movements into one main move was quite challenging - both to set and to do! It's very difficult to grade boulders like this, but based on the gym's grading, it ended up as a level 4 out of 5. Luckily, the starting and finishing positions are easily accessed from the ground, so it's easy to experiment on. The best thing about this move is that you only need to rely on the right body movement, timing and muscle memory to guide you into this dynamic move. After a few attempts, your unexpected moment of success will warm your body and leave you feeling like a champion.



After achieving the first move, I had two main options:

L - Option 1: walk the line

The first option was adding more holds, which would look good and at the same time force your body to stay in a certain position. Leaning to the right and keeping your hip right of your hands to climb this sloping layback to the top would be an interesting second phase of the boulder.



M - Option 2: mantle

The second option was creating another moment of uncertainty where the climber has to move really slowly, in contrast to the fast opening movement. I opted for this method.

Instead of a line of holds, I added one big dish. The hold required you to slowly place your foot next to your hand. Adding this challenge of hip flexibility provided me with the exact slow and steady movement I wanted to create for the top part of the boulder.



PHASE 2: TESTING AND TWEAKING

As I was setting by myself, I had to go through the process by myself, as opposed to bouncing ideas off a team.

Intended method: Did the intended method work?

Unintended methods: Were there ways to "break" the boulder? I couldn't climb it in any other way. It is easy to get lost in your own

intended beta, but what if a climber manages to do your boulder in a different way? I always try to offer an opportunity of learning or discovery for climbers; however, it's ultimately up to the climber how they interact with the boulder and what they take away from it. Setting a complex movement can often take up a lot of your setting time, so always ask yourself: is it worth forcing your intended way and, if so, what do you need to do to force it? Will forcing it change the boulder too much in a bad way? Will the boulder retain the same grade and style? How much time would you need to tweak it? Can it be done quickly or will it take too long? Are you able to tweak it alone or do you need the whole team?

TWEAKING PROCESS

1. Efficiently analyze the different parameters that can be tweaked:

- » Angle
- » Depth
- » Distance

2. Tweak and test until you are happy with your boulder, making sure to consider:

- » Time constraints
- » Impact on your mental capacity
- » Your own climbing and testing abilities
- » The workload of your tweaks and changes

After setting, it's always beneficial to get feedback from your team. Since I was setting alone on this day, this particular boulder doesn't

"YOU CAN OFTEN TELL A LOT ABOUT THE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK BY OBSERVING HOW CUSTOMERS INTERACT WITH YOUR BOULDER."



provide a good example of team involvement. When working with a team, you have the opportunity to discuss options and come to a consensus. For example, other setters on the team would perhaps have opted for an easier version of the move, or identified issues that I missed. When tweaking and testing in a team, it is important to distinguish between objective and subjective feedback. Comments should always be constructive and informative rather than based on personal likes and dislikes.

N - Once I had tested and tweaked the boulder until I was completely satisfied, I used set screws to tighten it completely, tidied the work area and opened the section for climbers to try. In hindsight, I could have opted for a more difficult finish to the boulder, but it is also rewarding for climbers not to have to struggle after they have achieved a complex

move. In the end, there is no right or wrong in bouldering and setting – it is all about getting creative and having fun moving!

PHASE 3: REVIEWING AND OBSERVING

Rather than asking customers for their opinion on my boulders, I always find it more beneficial and informative to simply sit back and observe. You can often tell a lot about the quality of your work by observing how customers interact with your boulder. Are they drawn to it? Do they interact positively? Are the movements too complex for the intended audience? Always try to avoid pushing your beta and your intentions onto other climbers. Simply let them explore and see how they approach your puzzle. Learn to analyze their interactions and, lastly, figure out how you can improve – after all, the next boulder is calling!

Niki Wiechmann spent most of his childhood in the woods or his parents' climbing gym, where he started setting when he was a teenager. His passion for climbing led him to quit university and took him out of Germany to London, Singapore and even Australia, where he lived from 2017 to 2019. Before that, he co-founded two bouldering gyms in Germany and discovered a new love for filming. He returned to Germany in July 2019. As part of Beta Routesetting he sets, hosts workshops, records and edits videos and publishes Climbing World Cup reports – always with a cup of tea in hand.

NIKLAS WIECHMANN

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Lives in: Berlin, Germany

Background: professional setter since 2010, Beta Routesetting, amateur gamer, amateur video artist



Photo: James Dyer / Blochhaus

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SPORTMAT EXPERIENCE



HIGH PERFORMANCE FOR BOULDER

TEXT & INTERVIEW: MARIA HILBER

KATJA VIDMAR

ABOUT INSPIRATION, OPPORTUNITY, TEAMWORK AND TAKING RISKS

◆ **Katja started climbing in 1997 and since then, her life has revolved around the sport. After competing in World Cups for around ten years, her focus changed to climbing outdoors. She was a coach for many years, but has always been more passionate about route setting, setting her first World Cup in Japan in 2018. Among other jobs, she co-owns 360HOLDS, which shapes and sells holds. As the first female international competition route setter, she gets more attention than she's actually comfortable with. But luckily for us, she has agreed to share some of her thoughts and experience with us today.**

MH: Can you tell us how you got into climbing and at what point you started route setting?

Katja: I started climbing in 1997 – it's been my passion for more than 20 years now. I would say climbing is in my blood, because my father was an alpinist. When we were younger, my sister Maja and I joined a climbing club. We were immediately hooked. I started participating in competitions but I was never too good at winning. I guess I just never had enough desire to beat others. I also loved climbing outdoors and, as time went on, I competed less and got more into rock climbing, especially bouldering.

Looking back, it's hard to tell when I actually started route setting. In the past, there were no commercial gyms in Slovenia that would hire setters. You started by working in local clubs, fixing holds when they wanted to change the spray wall or after events. Here and there, I did some route setting for commercial events. And that was it – step by step, I became more experienced. I always found setting really interesting and a good way to express myself, and I've always felt good

"GENDER WAS NEVER AN ISSUE FOR ME; IT WAS JUST ABOUT WORKING WITH PEOPLE."

about it. I like being creative and placing holds was actually a good addition to climbing. After I had stopped competing myself, I began to help with coaching and that was when I started setting for national team trainings.

It wasn't something that just happened spontaneously. I always worked hard and was extremely motivated to succeed. I took every opportunity I got. That's how I came to where I am today. I also feel lucky that Slovenia has a big route setting background with many good international setters. Getting into this environment, I was able to work with these setters and they were a big inspiration to me. Thanks to them, I learned a lot, I was given many opportunities and I learned to believe in myself.

MH: What is the typical life of a professional setter?

Katja: First of all, I would say that you have to love climbing and be very passionate about setting. Otherwise, there is a lot of very hard physical work involved and you probably wouldn't want to do it for a long time. You also need to be flexible about traveling. I like to travel – if I'm home for too long, I get restless. So it suits my lifestyle.

But setting is actually not my main professional occupation – it's just one of the things I do. I'm the co-owner of 360HOLDS, where I work in marketing and distribution, hold shaping and promotional setting. For me, all of these aspects are connected because without my experience in route setting, I wouldn't be a good shaper – and I'm still learning. Going rock climbing is a great source of inspiration for my role as a setter and as a shaper. It's all connected.

MH: How much time do you spend setting each month?

Katja: That's really hard to say because it's more of a periodical thing. If I set for a competition, I'm gone for a week. If it's for championships, it's three weeks. I don't have a fixed schedule.

MH: How often do you set commercially and how often for competitions?

Katja: Off the top of my head, I'd say I work more competitions, but it's probably 50/50 if the promotional setting I do for 360HOLDS counts as commercial. However, I don't work for a gym on a fixed basis.

MH: You mentioned that you were always inspired and encouraged by the climbers around you. Route setting, just like the entire climbing industry, is a rather male-dominated world. To what extent have you felt disadvantaged because of that? Or has it perhaps sometimes even been an advantage to be a woman among men?

Katja: To be honest, I had never thought about the gender thing until I got certified as an IFSC international route setter. That's when different media outlets wanted to do interviews, asking me precisely this question, and I thought: "OK, I should probably think about it!" I think I must have been lucky because I happened to be in the right environment, where it didn't matter if you were a man or a woman. We were all equal and I felt equal. Gender was never an issue for me; it was just about working with people.

You asked whether there is an advantage. I would say so, yes. A good setting team is mixed, with a mix of abilities and people that can work together, but are very different in terms of what they set and what their skills are. Having a woman in the team also means having more variety. We're different; that's obvious. Women can bring something different to the table that perhaps men can't.

At the same time, it's hard to generalize and I don't like putting people into boxes. It really all depends on the person. I've worked with many setters and everybody has a different approach – that's what makes a team special.

MH: Why do you think there are not so many female route setters? Are there barriers? Were you especially lucky to get opportunities that not many women get?

Katja: I think it will evolve over time. There are other professions which are predominantly male-dominated, and others which are more female-dominated. Still, I think in the future things will change and for sure, there will be more women. I hope so anyway.

I encourage the movement of bringing more women into route setting. I hope that more girls and women will become interested in setting, including at a high level. But I don't think that there is an easy recipe for it. It's a process.

I am very grateful for all the opportunities I have had and for the people who have supported me – like Simon Margon and later Jacky Godoffe. I was in the right place at the right time, but it was not a gift. I worked hard for it, I was eager to improve, to learn and to grow. In the end, you have to do the job, and it's not the easiest one.

MH: In order to encourage more women to try route setting in general, what needs to come from the top down, and what from the bottom up?

Katja: I'd say the doors are open in general. From my personal experience, I never had a feeling that I was not welcome because I was a woman. Some women might have the impression that there's no room for them. There might be certain doubts, for example, how do you deal with big volumes? But not even the men do everything all by themselves. It's all about teamwork!

Maybe all it takes is a little nudge in the right direction or some words of encouragement for girls or women to give it a try. What you need then is a lot of self-drive and motivation. If you're willing to work hard and you're a good team player, you'll be fine!

MH: Would it make sense for women to set the female routes and men to set the male routes in a World Cup?

Katja: Maybe, but not necessarily. I set for both, but it took me a while to feel confident when setting boulder problems for men. I hope that I contribute to adjusting the boulder problems for women. But

I also leave some of the work involved in testing the men's problems to the guys. I test everything, but for super powerful dynamic stuff for men, I can only rely on my instincts and on my teammates. I think

only few women in the world, women who are actually competition climbers, could really do the testing for men's boulders, and I hope that they get into setting and stay fit enough. :-)

Ultimately, a mixed team is a positive thing.

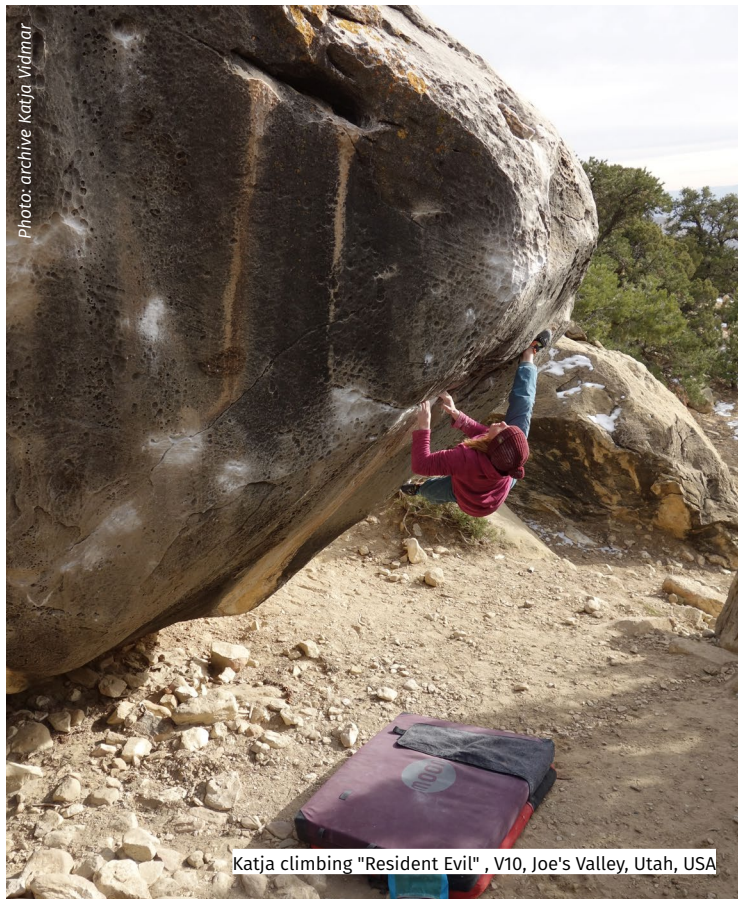
MH: How much has the style of route setting changed compared with when you started competing?

Katja: There's a huge difference. Route setting and climbing style have evolved a lot. There are completely new hold shapes available on the market and, obviously, route setting has evolved in line with that. And there are setters who are curious and eager enough to explore new and challenging movements in climbing.

MH: You set for IFSC events and other competitions, which often entail similar procedures and prerequisites. But the venues, organizers and teams often change. Does your job as a route setter vary a lot from competition to competition?

Katja: Every competition is different and a unique experience. Route setting never feels like repeating the same thing. The location, the team, the wall, the holds, you – everything changes from one event to the other. It is important to be able to adapt to a new situation every time.

Photo: Stanjko Gruden



Katja climbing "Resident Evil", V10, Joe's Valley, Utah, USA

MH: Can you describe your work routine when setting for an IFSC competition for us?

Katja: In theory, we have five days for setting. However, for various reasons it is often shorter if, for example, the wall is not yet ready, other preparations are still running or the weather is bad. We normally work as part of a team composed of three IFSC setters plus national setters. A bigger team doesn't necessarily make the job easier; sometimes it can slow the process down.

The chief setter sets out the plan for everyone. We start with the problems for the finals, continue with the semifinals and finish with the qualifications. Depending on the competition schedule, we have more or less time to make any final adjustments between rounds, depending on how the previous rounds went.

With the sport becoming bigger, we feel that our job as route setters is becoming more complex and more restricted. There are many different people to please – athletes, coaches, the audience, organizers and the media. Despite all this, it is important to remain true to your own vision.

"WHY ARE SOME COMPETITIONS GOOD AND OTHERS NOT? THERE'S A LOT OF ENERGY, RISK AND EMOTION PLAYING INTO THAT."

MH: Do you think it's good to get guidelines from the IFSC?

Katja: I don't think it's a bad thing to give guidelines. We have to know what we're supposed to do in order for the competition to work. Route setters, organizers, federations, TV – in the end we all have the same goal: a successful competition.

I think that the problem with guidelines is that it's easy to put them on paper – what they mean in practice is often a completely different story, however. It is certainly not easy to set guidelines that make the work of route setters clearer and easier, while giving them the freedom to be creative. If the route setters only paid attention to following some guidelines, if they would always try to stay on the safe side, this could as well result in a boring experience for climbers and the audience, and the outcome could be very unclear. In that way, competitions might lose many things that are hard to describe. Why are some competitions good and others not? There's a lot of energy, risk and emotion playing into that.

MH: What criteria do you use to determine whether you're satisfied with the job you did?

Katja: I'm very self-critical. :-) It's not often that I'm completely satisfied with my job. OK, maybe I'm satisfied but I'd never say: "That was amazing!" I usually immediately spot things that could be improved. For me, a good competition requires much more than just a perfect split. More has to happen. In order to achieve this, the setting team has to be prepared to take a risk. At the same time this means you move on very thin ice. The line between a super exciting competition and a very bad one is very thin. I have a lot of respect for those who take the risk and try out something different. In that way, the whole thing can evolve.

MH: Are you a risk-taker?

Katja: I try to find a good balance. The subject of risk is certainly connected with self-confidence and trust in one's own work, in the team and ultimately in the athletes. There are moments when it's not easy to pull it off. If things don't go as planned during a competition, it's difficult to stick to the plan. Making very small adjustments is sometimes a big decision. In those moments I would like to be more confident, trust the process and take the risk.

In the Bouldering World Cup in Moscow, I was the chief setter for the first time. It was a super exciting experience for me and I put a lot of pressure on myself. I was approached by many people about being the first female chief setter at an IFSC event, so I thought: "If it doesn't turn out to be good, they'll say that women can't do the job." After a hard

semifinal for the women, we decided to make some changes in the final problems. In hindsight, I wish I had trusted our initial plan. But in that crucial moment, I lost my confidence and played it safe.

MH: What's the biggest challenge of being chief setter?

Katja: There's the pressure, of course. And there are a lot of organizational tasks and more general admin work involved. It's important to be able to switch between things. You need to keep a very good overview of what's going on all the time, both while route setting and during the competition. Basically, you need a cool head, self-confidence and trust in your team. I learned a lot from my first experience as a chief setter. In the end it wasn't as I had hoped, but I have to accept the result as it is, learn from it and carry on.

MH: Would you take on the challenge of being chief setter again?

Katja: Yes, I think so. I like challenges. :-) I've learned a lot about myself as a person and as a setter from this first experience. I feel I can do better next time and not make the same mistakes again.

MH: Which round gets the most attention from route setters? Are the finals more important than the others?

Katja: I think all rounds are important, including qualification. But we route setters focus on different things in each round. Everything together must be a round thing, one competition. Of course, the finals are the highlight of the entire competition and the most nerve-racking to watch.

MH: What are the main aspects that need to be changed to improve competition setting at an international level?

Katja: There are many things that could be improved. The best way to improve route setting is to improve the framework conditions. For example, the wall should be ready when the setting starts, all the materials should be there, and the quality and selection of holds and materials should be good. With the growth of the sport, the pressure and limitations for the setters have increased, but the conditions have not improved so much.

MH: In what ways do you think that the style of boulder problems will evolve in the future? Is there still room for changes and further development?

Katja: I'm sure there's room for further developments. Climbing is a young sport and I don't think we can even imagine what will be possible in the future. Everyone is afraid that there will only be coordination moves in the future. In certain competitions, that style might have been more dominant than in others. But if you take a closer look, that's definitely not the case for all events. The athletes always need to show a combination of many skills. It's not just about coordination and jumping from one jug to the other. For example, even if initiating a move requires coordination skills, holding onto the target hold may well require a lot of power, precision and balance. My personal style of climbing is far from coordination, but I do like to set such moves. It's cool to see the athletes fly. :-)

Coming back to the question, I think that the style of climbing will evolve, but I'm not afraid that it's evolving in just one direction. Hopefully, route setters will have enough freedom that they can explore and find moves that haven't been done yet. We'll see.

MH: If you could, which style of a boulder problem would you choose to set in finals?

Katja: I normally get inspired in the moment and I like to change styles. If I had the choice, I'd choose a wall profile that looks good to me and holds that inspire me at first sight, and that's only really something you can do in the moment. Having said that, I do like funky slabs a lot.

"THE LINE BETWEEN A SUPER EXCITING COMPETITION AND A VERY BAD ONE IS VERY THIN."

MH: How long do you think you can continue working as an international route setter at your current level?

Katja: I actually have no idea. I take every opportunity that comes my way and over time we will see what happens next. I guess it's a bit how I live my life. I've never said: "I'm going to compete for one more year and then I'm going to stop." It just happened.

If I don't find it personally challenging anymore or if I can't contribute enough to the team's tasks, I won't want to keep doing it. The same goes if I feel that I'm put in a team just because I'm a woman. I want to do my share of work and I want to contribute to the end result, otherwise it's pointless for me. Right now, my biggest motivation is having a challenge and a team of people who share my passion.

I actually also don't like being interviewed precisely because of being a woman doing the job I do. I don't like being in the spotlight; I just want to set boulder problems. :-) At the same time, if all this attention helps encourage more women to try out route setting, I think it's great. I see it as my way of giving something back, because I feel lucky to be in my position. That's why I didn't say no to this interview.

MH: What advice would you give climbers who want to try out route setting, or maybe even make it their profession?

Katja: Be open, hard-working, never stop learning, forget your ego, be a good team player and love what you do. Be curious, creative, self-confident, a little crazy, and above all, be yourself! Finally, accept the uncertainty of route setting and enjoy the thrilling moments.

MH: Thank you, Katja, for taking the time to talk to me!



Photo: Stanko Gruden

KATJA VIDMAR

Born: 1984

Lives in: Postojna, Slovenia

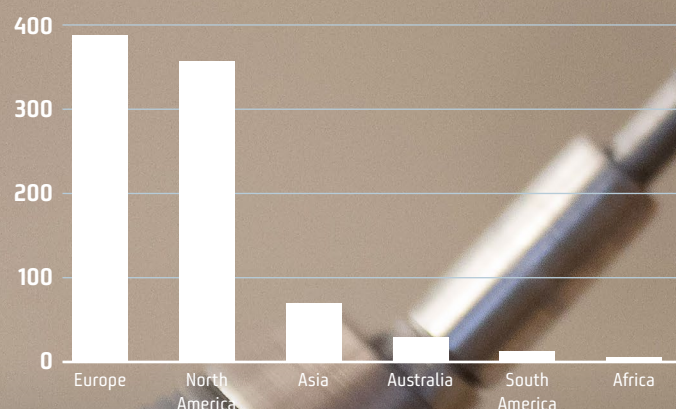
Background: Physical education teacher, climbing coach, hold shaper, international route setter, co-owner of 360HOLDS

Route setters – we call them the key players of the indoor climbing industry, as they are the ones who create the product the indoor climbing industry is selling. Route setters envision and set the boulder problems and routes that play a major role in the success of climbing gyms. Just like artists, they create colorful paintings of movement and build three-dimensional sculptures. But who are the people behind the holds on the walls? What are their backgrounds, skills, needs, concerns and perceptions? What do their job profiles look like around the world? To gain more insights into this area, we developed a comprehensive study – the first of its kind to be carried out on an international level – with a view to gaining an initial overview of the profession of route setting.

Our survey was taken by 976 route setters from 53 different nations. With 359 respondents, the United States of America was the most represented country, followed by the United Kingdom with 95 participants and Germany with 84 participants. We asked the route setters 80 different questions about their experience, work processes, safety and health issues, training, career and team aspects.

We'll start off by describing the average international route setter and then take a closer look at different results of interest and address issues and needs.

WHERE DO THE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS COME FROM?



ROUTE SETTERS INTERNATIONAL

A SURVEY ON THE PROFESSION OF ROUTE SETTING

TEXT: PETER ZEIDELHACK

STATISTICS & DIAGRAMS: GEORGE NADER, EGON LARCHER

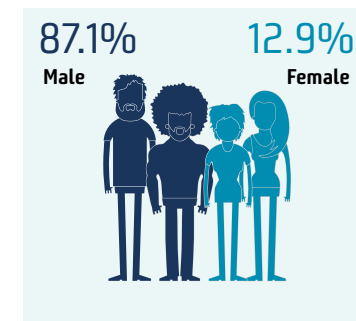
ROUTE SETTERS – WHO ARE THEY?

The average international route setter is 31 years old, and is male in 87% of all cases. They have been climbing for over 13 years and setting for seven years. The main reason for becoming a route setter was proactively asking or being asked to set. Positively, 75% of the survey respondents think that they will still be setting in five years' time.

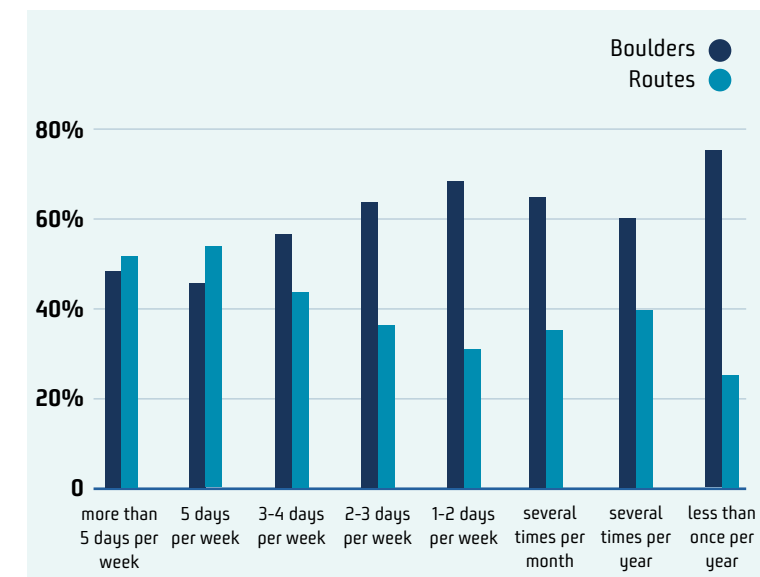
HOW OLD ARE YOU?



WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?



ON AVERAGE, HOW OFTEN DO YOU SET?



WORK ROUTINES

The international route setter mostly sets around one to three days per week, almost always in a commercial environment. Less than 5% set mostly in a competition environment. Of all the setters surveyed, 65% only set for one gym. The remaining 35% set for several facilities: on average two to three gyms.

One third of our survey respondents only set boulders, while 21% set both routes and boulders more or less equally. On average, seven boulders are set each day, compared with three routes per day, with an average wall height of almost 14 meters. When setting routes, almost two thirds of our respondents set using ropes most of the time, of which only 51% work redundantly. Just 10% usually set with lifts.

The amount of testing and forerunning time differs slightly between routes and boulder problems. While setting boulders, the average forerunning time reportedly takes up 40% of the day, falling to 30% for routes.

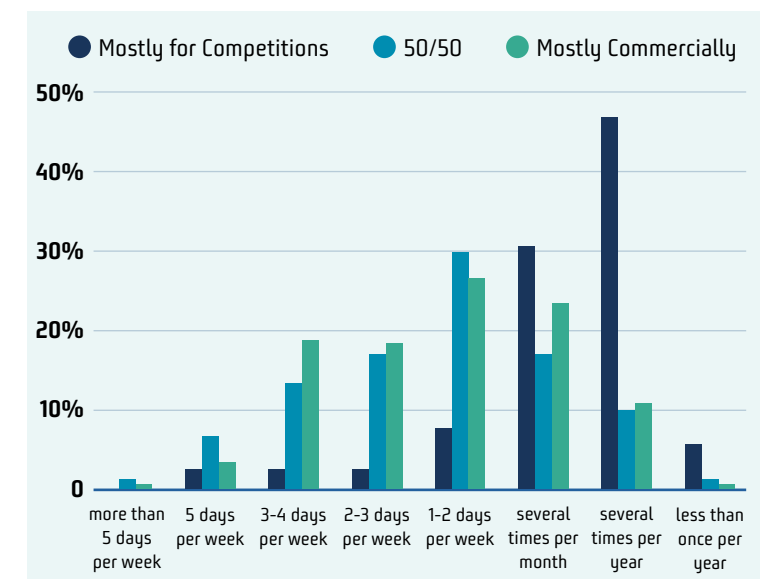
When it comes to canvas size, the international route setter has an average of 1,291 square meters of surface at their disposal (818 square meters for bouldering-only gyms). A boulder problem stays on the wall for an average of 7 weeks/1.92 months and a route for around 13.1 weeks/3.27 months.

In a setter's eyes, "attractiveness of walls and holds", "artistic freedom" and "team spirit" are the main factors that make a gym interesting for them to work for.

Around 50% of gyms order new holds every three to six months at an average cost of 3,470 euros (approx. 3,875 dollars). In most cases, it is the head setter or the manager/owner who decides which holds to buy. Internationally, almost 40% of route setters prefer polyurethane (PU) over polyester (PE) holds (the most commonly used materials), whereas 56% of route setters like to use both of these materials.

Average boulders set per day:	7
Average routes set per day:	3

HOW OFTEN DO YOU SET? DO YOU MOSTLY SET COMMERCIALLY OR FOR COMPETITIONS?



DO YOU SET FROM A LIFT OR ON A ROPE?

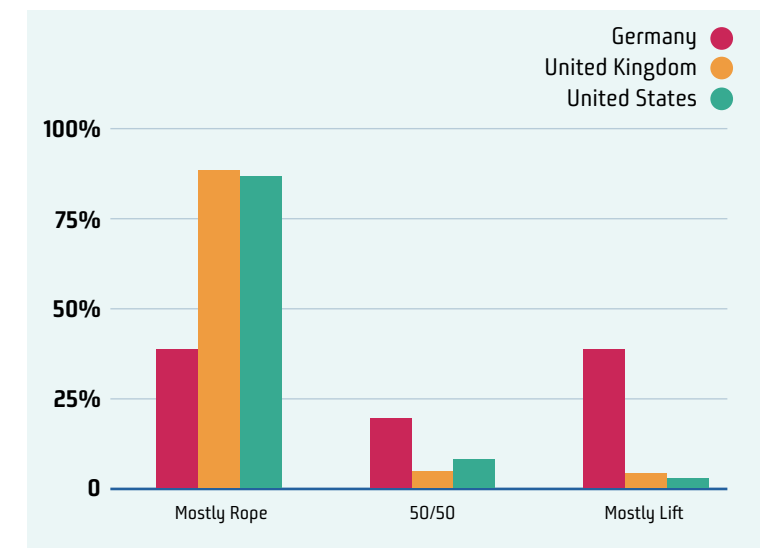




Photo: Tom Lindinger / Orgasport

TOOLS, SAFETY AND HEALTH

Of our survey respondents, 85% use an impact driver to drill holds onto the wall, while almost 8% use a T wrench or similar. Luckily, in at least 75% of cases, tools and personal protective equipment (PPE) are provided to route setters by the gym. In cases where route setters are expected to buy their own equipment, around 60% spend less than 250 euros per year and 20% between 250 and 500 euros per year.

When it comes to PPE such as eye and hearing protection, an astounding 25% of our survey respondents said that they don't use any. In total, 35% use eye protection and almost 27% use hearing protection. Almost 50% of setters perceive the level of safety in their work environment as high.

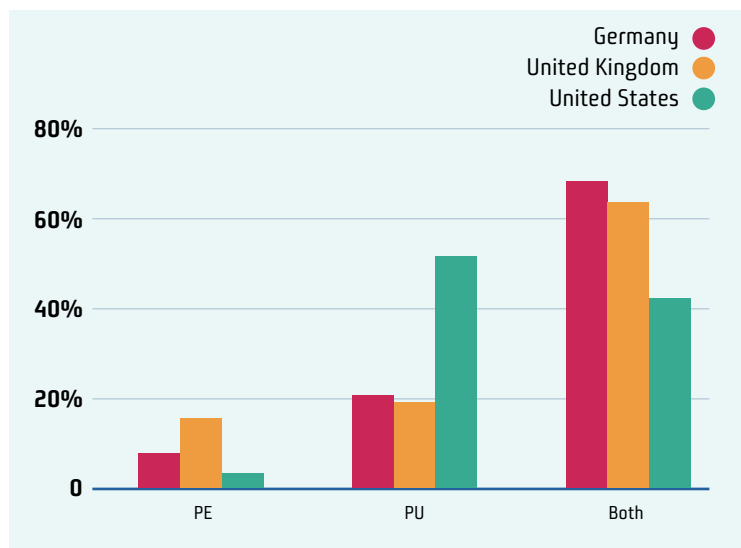
As route setting is considered to be a very physical profession, we asked our setters whether they had suffered any work-related injuries. The top three causes for work-related injuries were "being tired" (56%), "heavy loads" (27%) and "missing personal protective equipment" (11%). Other responses included "accidents", "while climbing/forerunning moves" and "not wearing protection like gloves or safety glasses". Injuries related to a lack of personal protective equipment account for an average of three days of not being able to set per year.

To protect the health of route setters and prevent work-related injuries, some gyms are now providing services like yoga (15%) or personal training (9%), but almost 70% of the setters we surveyed said that there aren't any such offers in their gym.

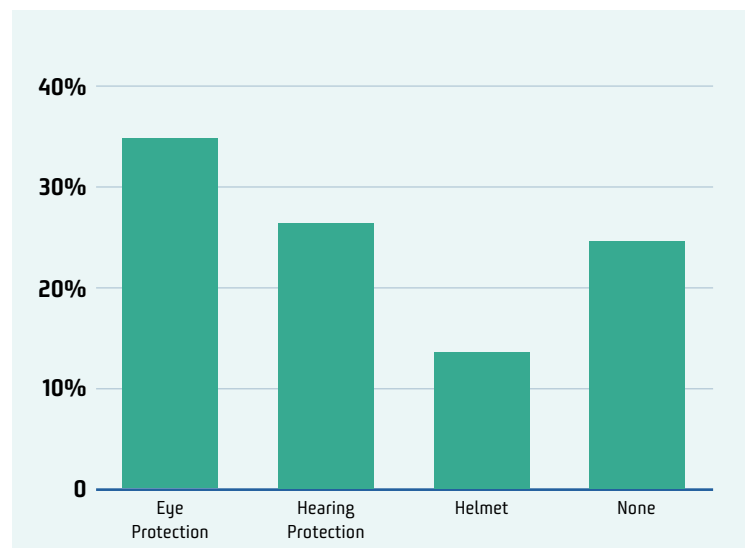
Almost 35% of our respondents receive other benefits like subsidized food or drinks during work, 13% receive drinks for free and more than 18% are entitled to free food and drinks during working hours, while 33% have no such benefits.

TWO THIRDS OF OUR RESPONDENTS SET USING ROPES MOST OF THE TIME, OF WHICH ONLY 51% WORK REDUNDANTLY.

WHICH HOLD MATERIAL DO YOU PREFER?



WHAT TYPE OF PPE DO YOU USE?



WHEN IT COMES TO ROUTES, ROUTE SETTERS ESTIMATE THAT THE MAJORITY OF CLIMBERS CLIMB AT A FRENCH 6B RANGE, AND FONT 6A IN A BOULDERING SCENARIO.

THE GRADES

In route setting, the customer is king – or queen. This survey backed up the results of the first study we conducted among indoor climbers (published in RSM #1), in which we determined their climbing abilities (average lead climbing grade: french 6a, bouldering: font 6a). The same applies to the average grades tracked through the Vertical-Life climbing app. When it comes to routes, route setters estimate that the majority of climbers climb at a French 6b range, and font 6a in a bouldering scenario.

Difficulty grades are regarded as one of the most important factors in a gym environment, as they provide orientation for customers. They should be accurate and consistent throughout the gym to help ensure a positive user experience. Of our survey respondents, 60% said that the head setter or manager decides on these difficulty grades, while another 60% said that they use other routes in the gym as a reference, with the head setter or manager providing some guidance. Only 28% use outdoor routes as a reference (multiple answers allowed).

The single routes and boulders are mostly graded by a team (80%). In some cases, the route setter (35%) or the head setter (18%) grades them alone (multiple answers allowed).

THE SINGLE ROUTES AND BOULDERS ARE MOSTLY GRADED BY A TEAM (80%). IN SOME CASES, THE ROUTE SETTER (35%) OR THE HEAD SETTER (18%) GRADES THEM ALONE.

DOCUMENTATION AND CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

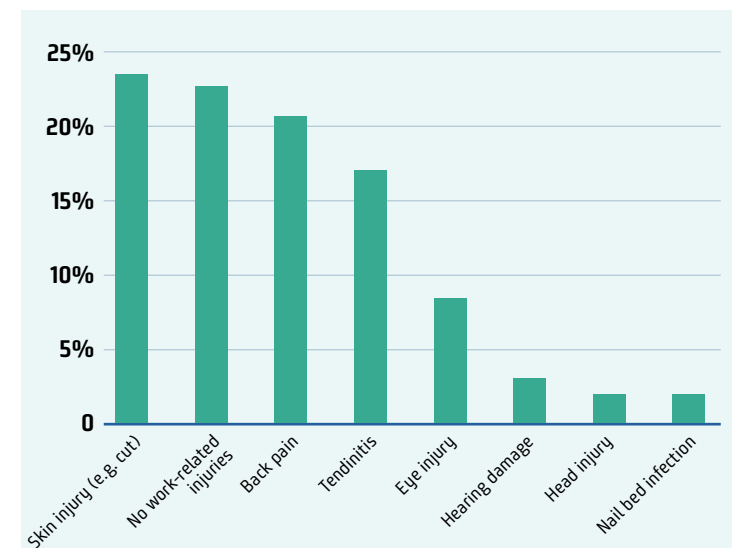
Documentation tools are also helpful for head setters and their teams. Overall, 30% of our survey participants don't use any tools to manage and document route setting, 42% use spreadsheets and around 20% use a software-based solution.

We asked our survey participants how customers give feedback to the route setters. Almost 53% said that the majority of feedback comes from simply watching the customers and interacting with them. Around 20% said that they used a comments box as a way of obtaining customer feedback, while 10% use a digital tool and almost 7% rely on a test team. In terms of interacting with the climbing community, 30% said it is sometimes part of the setting job but not always compensated, 18% said they do it "on the clock" and 40% said that it's not part of their job profile.

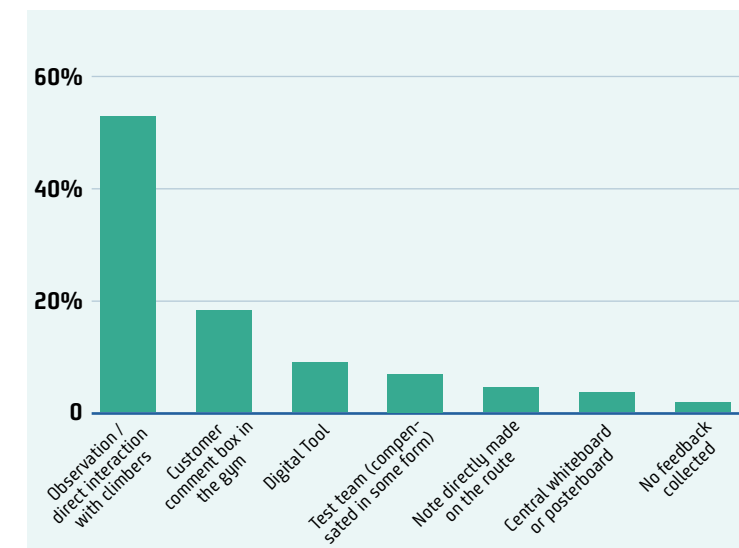


Photo: Tom Lindinger / Orgasport

HAVE YOU SUFFERED INJURIES THAT CAN BE TRACED BACK TO WORK?



HOW DOES YOUR GYM COLLECT FEEDBACK?

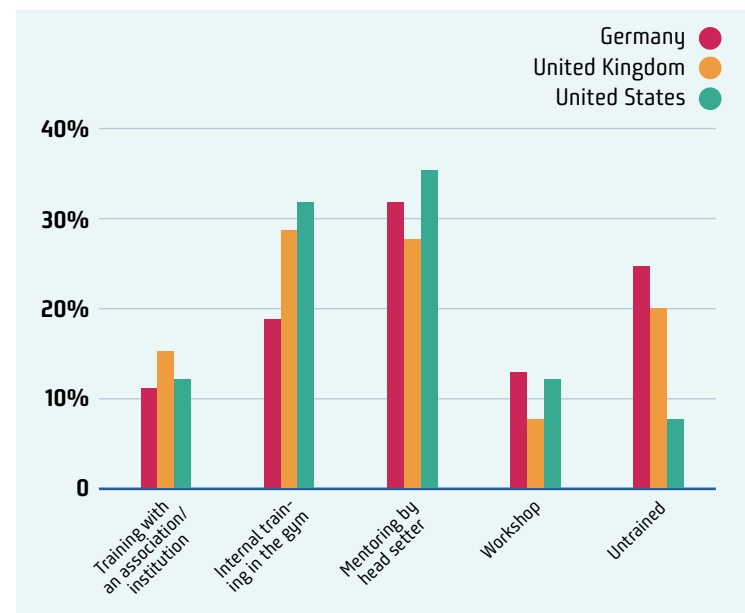


TRAINING

We then asked our route setters how they learned their skills, as clearly route setting is not something you can just learn from reading a book. Almost 50% gained valuable skills through a mentoring process with the head setter or similar, while 45% attended an internal training program, 20% took part in a workshop and another 20% had no training at all. Only 17% got to where they are through a training program offered by a federation/institution.

Of those setters who attended some kind of training program, almost 60% said that they benefited greatly from it and around 72% rated it as either good or very good. A total of 56% of respondents said that the training programs offered by federations mainly focus on competition setting, while 30% stated that commercial setting training is also available in their countries. Overall, 72% of setters said that, in their countries, both competition and commercial training programs consist

HOW DID YOU LEARN TO SET?

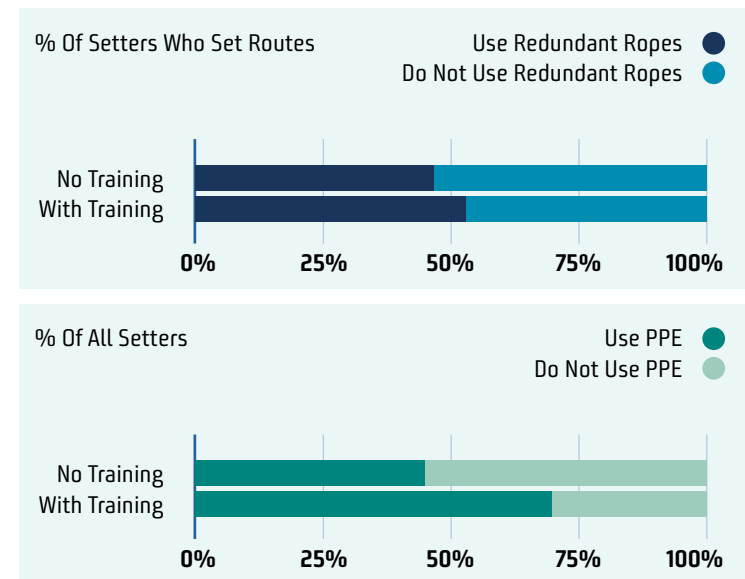


of several levels, with the five-stage USAC Setting certification being the best known on the competition side. For commercial setting, the RSA program in the United Kingdom (two levels) and the DAV program in Germany (two levels) are well known.

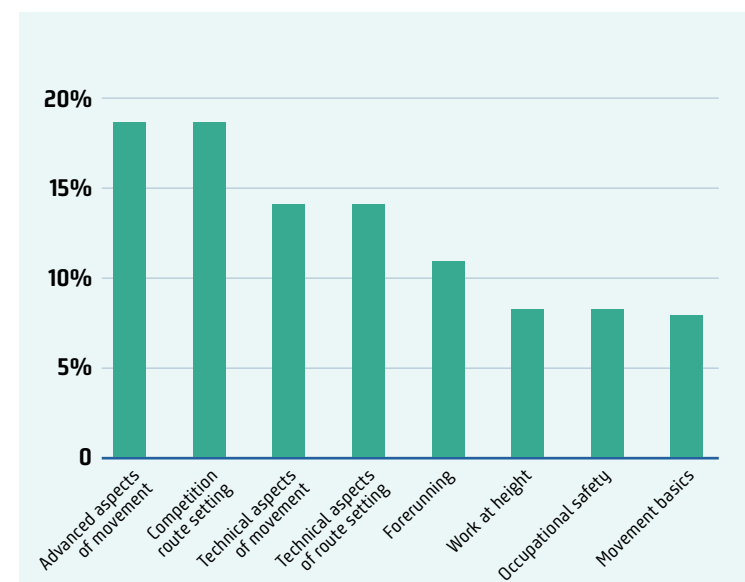
We then wanted to determine whether attending a training program also leads to improved work methods and ethics. Looking at redundant work on ropes or the use of personal protective equipment, those who underwent a training program are more likely to use PPE or work redundantly when working on ropes.

With regard to potential workshop topics, international route setters were asked which fields they would find most interesting. Advanced aspects of movement was the most popular answer given, closely followed by competition setting. Learning about the technical aspects of route setting and movement was also mentioned.

DO TRAINING PROGRAMS LEAD TO IMPROVED WORK METHODS AND ETHICS?



WHAT TOPICS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN A POTENTIAL WORKSHOP?



TEAM

Now, we'll move on to the team itself and team structures. On average, a team consists of 6.5 setters, of which 1.6 are self-employed. On average, 5.3 are male and 1.2 female. The number of women increases a little on teams of 20 setters or more. Interestingly, the more setters there are on a team, the more full-time setters there are. The main position of the survey participants is "route setter" (40%) or "head setter" (32%).

Of all the setters surveyed, 73% are employed and 11% are self-employed, with the remaining respondents having switched between the two in the past. More than 75% of self-employed climbers don't have any proper insurance for setting, an issue that needs to be addressed in the future.

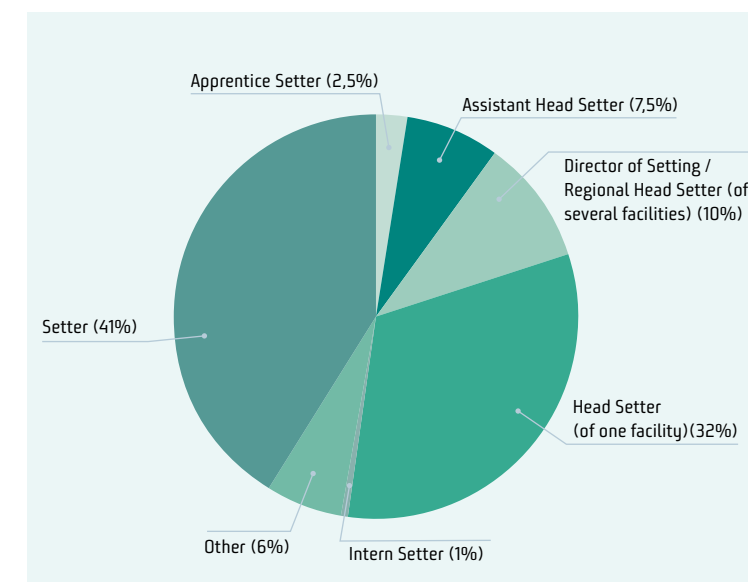
On the whole, 52% of participants say that the ratio of male/female setters on their team has not changed in the last five years, whereas 40% state that the number of women has increased. Only 8% saw a decrease in female setters on their team. When it comes to equal opportunities for men and women in route setting, 78% believe that they exist. However, 20% of male setters do not believe that there are equal opportunities for women, with the main reasons for this being that setting is "male dominated", there is a "lack of interest from women", setting is "physically demanding" and there is a "common belief that women are not strong enough". As for the women we surveyed who don't believe they are given equal opportunities, the main reasons are "head setters assume women are not physically and men-

COMPARISON OF ROUTE SETTERS AND CLIMBERS:

In terms of gender, climbers are not adequately represented, especially if compared to the gender distribution in a climbing gym.

	2018 Survey Participants Setters	Vertical-Life + 8a.nu users Climbers	DAV Kletter- & Boulderzentrum Climbers
Average Age	33	34	36
Males	80.5%	73%	53%
Females	19.5%	27%	47%

WHAT'S YOUR POSITION WITHIN THE TEAM?



tally strong enough for the job", "many women do not climb as hard as men", "women are generally discouraged from getting into setting" and the "general demand for women being low".

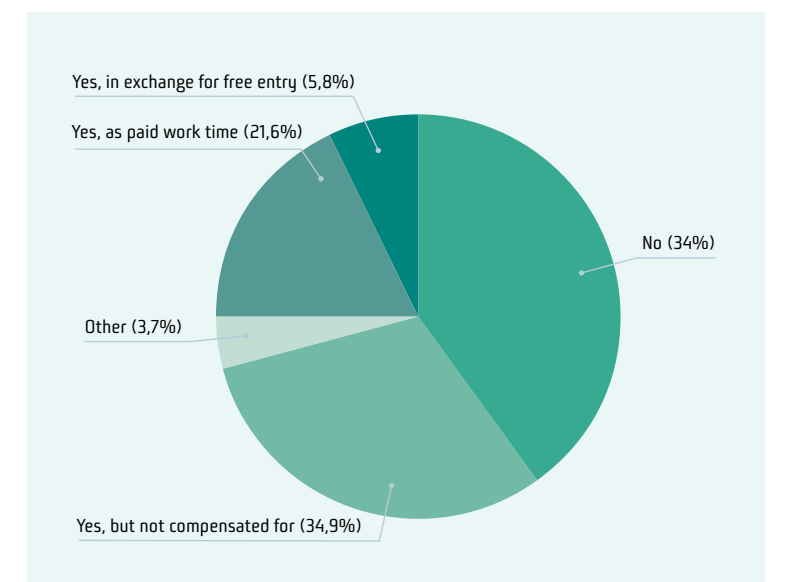
Over 80% of setters receive evaluation and feedback from their head setter or manager. 65% receive such feedback during working hours and 16% during talks or meetings outside of their actual work. The team itself reportedly discusses work-related topics during setting (71%) and also outside of work (18%). Team spirit is built by climbing/bouldering together outdoors (41%), having breakfast or lunch together during work (36%) or other means of team-building (20%). Almost 40% of the setters stated that no measures are taken to boost team spirit. For a surprising 41% of respondents, there are no problems within the team or with the management. The main issues experienced by the remaining participants are differences with management (22%), differences between more experienced and less experienced setters (21%), a lack of resources and poor communication (both 20%).

To change day-to-day routines or go off the beaten track in setting, the most common means reported were visiting other gyms (45%), climbing outside (42%), bringing in guest setters (38%) and holding workshops (23%).

One of our open-ended questions was how workflows could be improved. The most common answers given were "wall maintenance", "time management and to be more efficient", "hold cleaning and washing" and "managing setters".



IS COMMUNITY INTERACTION REQUIRED/PROMOTED AS PART OF THE JOB?



OF THOSE SETTERS WHO ATTENDED SOME KIND OF TRAINING PROGRAM, ALMOST 60% SAID THAT THEY BENEFITED GREATLY FROM IT.





Photo: Vladek Zimr / adidas Rockstars

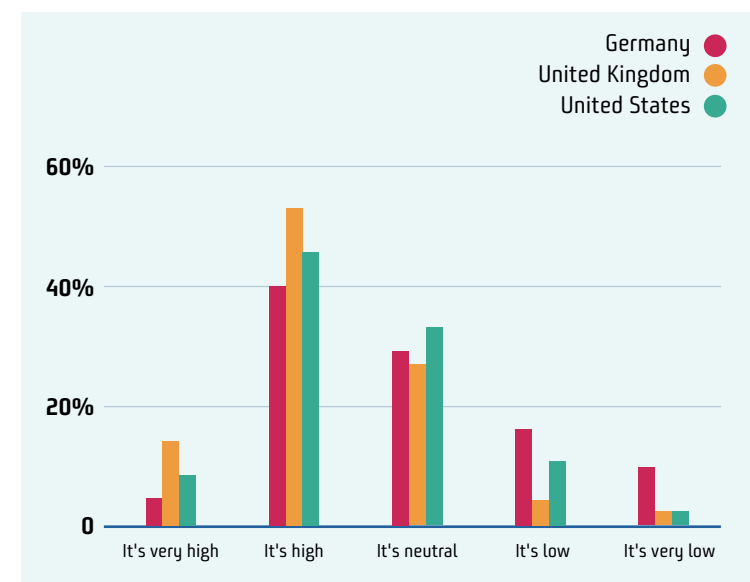
PROFESSIONALIZATION AND COMPENSATION

Survey participants were also asked about how they perceived the level of professionalism within the industry. The majority of respondents perceives the degree of professionalization as high.

When it comes to money and compensation, a shocking 10% of our setters reported that they don't receive any compensation for setting, while 7% receive non-monetary compensation, e.g. they work in return for free entrance or membership or as part of another job. This leaves 82% who actually get paid to set. Of these setters, more than 44% get paid by the hour, 26% on a fixed salary and 14% by the day. Less than 10% are paid per route or boulder.

For 61% of the setters, monetary compensation has improved over the last five years, whereas for 26%, it has stayed the same. According to 70% of the setters, they cannot make a living from setting alone, which partially stems from the fact that it is a physical challenge to set for more than three days a week.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE DEGREE OF GENERAL PROFESSIONALISM IN YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT/GYM?



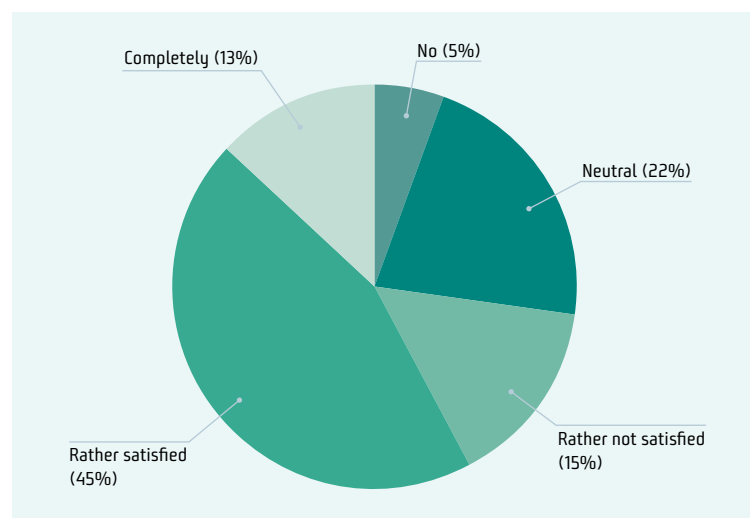
CAREER PATH AND JOB PROFILES

To determine whether there were any solutions to this issue, we asked participants about their previous and current job profiles, job profiles they would find interesting in the future and job profiles they consider irrelevant.

Approximately 11% of setters have worked as "full-time setters" in the past, with almost 26% currently working full time. A total of 31% say they would be interested in working full time in the future, whereas this was reported as irrelevant for another 32%. Of those surveyed, 43% are "part-time route setters", rising to almost 57% for "route setters and forerunners". Currently, around 30% are employed as "route setters and coaches", a position that another 31% would be interested in. Meanwhile, around 24% currently work as "route setters and on front desk/service", but this position was reported as irrelevant for

A SHOCKING 10% OF OUR SETTERS REPORTED THAT THEY DON'T RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR SETTING.

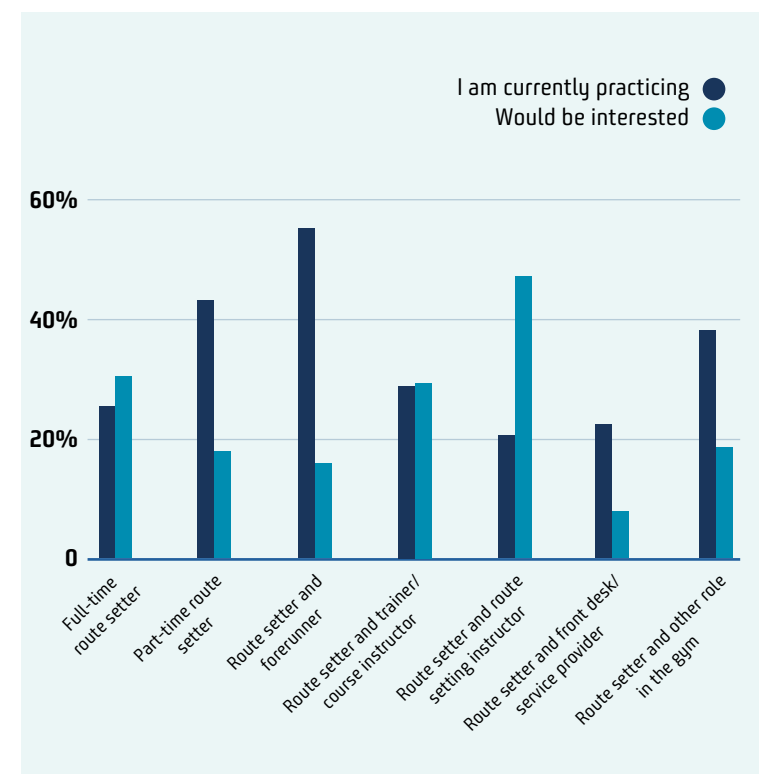
ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR COMPENSATION?



almost 45%. The most interesting job profile according to almost 50% of respondents was "route setter and setting coach", but only 22% actually hold this position at the moment. In conclusion, route setting, combined with a related task that entails less physical strain, would be the most interesting job profile for international route setters.

Finally, we asked route setters to name any concerns or grievances they might have, with the most common answers given being a desired increase in remuneration, problems with pay gaps among route setters and a poor balance between pay and time invested. "Time pressure" and "miscommunication" were also stated as problems in the setting community.

WHICH JOB PROFILE (EMPLOYEE OR SELF-EMPLOYED) DO YOU CURRENTLY HOLD AND WHICH ONE WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN IN THE FUTURE?



WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

This survey has revealed a wealth of insights into the world of route setting and route setters. Can route setting be regarded as sustainable? Can the job be described as a real profession – is it possible to make a living from it and are there prospects for progression? Are the achievements of the route setters sufficiently recognized and is there sufficient compensation for high workloads?

One takeaway from the survey is obvious – by and large, route setters love their jobs. With many coming from a climbing background, being passionate about climbing and now having the opportunity to earn money doing something close to their hearts – setters are idealists! After all, as we have discovered, 75% of our survey respondents said they would still be setting in five years' time.

75% OF OUR SURVEY RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WOULD STILL BE SETTING IN FIVE YEARS' TIME.

However, it is also clear that improvements are still needed to further professionalize the job and turn it into a sustainable craft in terms of safety, money, career prospects, health and motivation. As long as the indoor climbing industry keeps growing, the focus on climbing in general will increase, too, and so will the need to provide high-quality route setting. Route setters must be able to stay in their jobs for as long as possible so that they can gain experience and develop their profession further.

If our survey has taught us anything, it is that anyone in a position of responsibility should do everything they can to keep their route setters motivated, fairly paid and appreciated. It is important to map out a career pathway for your setters and, above all, care for the team. Teach them, send them on training programs, give them access to workshops, offer them perks and extra support to cope with the physical load and offer them networking opportunities. Develop more training for commercial route setting – because it is needed. And don't forget to exchange tips with other setters and obtain feedback from gym customers – after all, it is the setters creating the product we are selling.

BETWEEN PASSION AND PROFESSION

CLIMBING GYM MANAGERS

ZWISCHEN LEIDENSCHAFT UND BERUF

DER KLETTERHALLENMANAGER

TEXT & PHOTOS: MARKUS GRÜBL

📌 **Climbing gym managers – they're the cogs that keep the wheels turning, but when everything's running smoothly, they're largely invisible. We met two of these unsung heroes at the German Alpine Club (DAV) climbing center in Augsburg.**

It's unusually quiet. Just a few climbers are sitting at the striking wooden tables, enjoying the sun shining through the open glass façades. They're chatting animatedly. The background noise is only interrupted by the shrill hiss of the milk foamer and suddenly there's a scent of coffee in the air. "We complement each other extremely well," says Oliver Bader, serving his colleague Ferdinand Triller a fresh cappuccino topped with beautifully frothy milk. "Ferdl," as he's known here, is punching away at the keys on the cash register at the entrance to the modern bistro, a look of concentration on his face. Together, the pair are responsible for managing the DAV climbing center in Augsburg.



Ferdinand Triller

📌 **Wenn alles gut läuft, sind sie meist unsichtbar. Trotzdem hängt eigentlich alles an ihnen – den Kletterhallenmanagern. Wir haben im DAV Kletterzentrum Augsburg zwei Vertreter dieser „stillen Helden“ getroffen.**

Es ist ungewöhnlich ruhig. Nur ein paar Kletterer sitzen an den markanten Holztischen und genießen die Sonne, die durch die offenen Glasfronten scheint. Sie unterhalten sich angeregt. Die monotone Geräuschkulisse wird nur von einem schrillen Zischen der Milchlanze durchbrochen, plötzlich liegt Kaffeegeruch in der Luft. „Wir ergänzen uns einfach extrem gut“, sagt Oliver Bader, während er seinem Kollegen Ferdinand Triller einen frischen Cappuccino mit einer leuchtend weißen Milchhaube serviert. „Ferdl“, wie er hier genannt wird, hackt indes angeregt und konzentriert



Oliver Bader

in die Tasten des Kassensystems am Eingangsbereich des modernen Bistros. Zusammen sind die beiden für das Management des DAV Kletterzentrums in Augsburg zuständig.

SPORT CLIMBING IS BOOMING

What started as a way of training for rock climbers in the know has since taken on a life of its own. The DAV opened its first climbing gym in Berchtesgaden over 25 years ago. DAV sections now operate a good 200 artificial climbing structures in Germany, providing members with bases for education, training, and meeting other climbers. And Augsburg is no different. Across a total climbing surface of over 47,250 square feet (4,390 square meters), the climbing center, which

DER KLETTERSPOORT BOOMT

Was ursprünglich lediglich als Insider-Training für das Klettern am Fels anfang, hat mittlerweile eine große Eigendynamik entwickelt. Vor über 25 Jahren wurde die erste Kletterhalle des Deutschen Alpenvereins (DAV) in Berchtesgaden eröffnet. Mittlerweile betreiben die Sektionen des DAV gut 200 künstliche Kletteranlagen in Deutschland und stellen damit ihren Mitgliedern Stützpunkte für Ausbildung und Training so-

also serves as the Bavarian state training center, provides both eager recreational and amateur climbers as well as ambitious athletes and professionals with the chance to cut loose and improve their skills.

"No two climbing gyms are the same," says Ferdl – and this is precisely what attracted him to the role of climbing gym manager. He relishes the need for creativity, the challenging work, and the opportunities for personal development. Oli, who is listening to his partner intently and with a critical ear, has no choice but to agree: "For me, work doesn't necessarily need to have any negative connotations." It soon becomes clear that they mean what they say – the climbing gym is like a second home to them and they're part of the furniture. They seem to really enjoy what they do, which makes it difficult to distinguish work from leisure. And they agree that "there's a blurred line between passion and profession here."

"THERE'S A BLURRED LINE BETWEEN PASSION AND PROFESSION HERE"

„DER ÜBERGANG ZWISCHEN LEIDENSCHAFT UND BERUF IST HIER FLIESSEND"

A CV SHAPED BY CLIMBING

Climbing is their passion – and it's almost always been part of their lives. 50-year-old Oli used to work in the retail industry in various alpine sports departments and joined the Augsburg climbing center in 1998. Ferdl came on board in 2018 as the gym expanded. He, too, has been on the scene for a long time as a climber, route setter, trainer, judge, and now manager. The 49-year-old even gave up his original career as an engineer. The pair share the wide range of tasks involved in running a climbing gym.

The loud hum of the impact drivers can be heard echoing around the gym. Ropes are hanging on the walls and an enormous blue work platform towers towards the ceiling in the middle of the climbing area. The route setter standing on it can be seen securing a large volume to the wall. A new route is being brought to life here. "I test as many routes as I can myself," explains Ferdl, who is also responsible for inspecting holds, walls, and bolts. Far from looking after the gym on their own, the two managers are supported by a large team of around 60 to 80 staff who largely work independently, taking care of route setting, the sports facilities, the events program, catering, the shop, and marketing. The managers nevertheless like to get their hands dirty wherever they can. "It's crucial that you understand every process down to the smallest detail," explains Ferdl.

"IT'S CRUCIAL THAT YOU UNDERSTAND EVERY PROCESS DOWN TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL"

„ES IST WICHTIG, DASS MAN ALLE PROZESSE BIS INS KLEINSTE DETAIL VERSTEHT"

CLIMBING GYM MANAGERS – A WIDE RANGE OF TASKS

As climbing gym managers, Oli and Ferdl need to be as versatile as their role demands. Their primary task is overseeing the smooth operation of the climbing facilities offered in the gym. This is about much more than continuously setting new and exciting routes and also involves running a customer-friendly range of courses. The challenges here include designing the climbing courses and setting the prices as well as putting together a competent team of trainers. The virtually never-ending list of target groups makes this easier said than done. Climbing is a recreational sport and perfecting the balancing

wie beliebte Treffpunkte zur Verfügung. Auch in Augsburg ist das der Fall. Auf einer Gesamtkletterfläche von 4.390 Quadratmetern bietet das Kletterzentrum der Sektion, gleichzeitig Landesleistungszentrum Bayern, sowohl eifrigen Freizeit- und Hobbysportlern als auch ambitionierten Athleten und Profis die Möglichkeit, sich auszutoben und ihr Können zu verbessern.

„Jede Kletterhalle ist anders“, sagt Ferdl, und genau das ist es, was den Beruf als Kletterhallenmanager für ihn ausmacht. Er spricht von Kreativität, anspruchsvollen Aufgaben und der Möglichkeit, sich selbst zu entfalten. Auch Oli, der den Aussagen seines Partners aufmerksam und kritisch lauscht, kann letztendlich nur zustimmen: „Für mich muss Arbeit kein negatives Wort sein.“ Ihnen ist anzumerken, dass sie es ernst meinen: In der Kletterhalle fühlen sie sich fast schon zu Hause und wirken wie ein ganz natürlicher Bestandteil des Inventars. Es scheint ihnen Spaß zu machen. Arbeit von Freizeit zu unterscheiden ist dabei nur schwer möglich und sie sind sich einig: „Der Übergang zwischen Leidenschaft und Beruf ist hier fließend.“

KLETTERN IM LEBENS LAUF

Ihre Leidenschaft ist das Klettern – und genau das durchzieht beinahe ihr ganzes Leben. Der 50-jährige Oli arbeitete vorher im Einzelhandel, genauer gesagt in diversen Bergsportabteilungen, und ist nun bereits seit 1998 mit dem Kletterzentrum Augsburg verhaftet. Zur Erweiterung der Halle 2018 kam dann Ferdl mit ins Boot. Auch er ist schon lange in der Szene verwurzelt; als Kletterer, Schrauber, Trainer, Schiedsrichter und eben seit letztem Jahr auch als Manager. Sogar seinen ursprünglichen Beruf als Ingenieur hat der 49-Jährige dafür aufgegeben. Zusammen teilen sie sich die vielfältigen Aufgaben, die bei der Führung einer Kletterhalle eben so anstehen.

Das laute Rattern der Akkuschauber schallt durch die Halle. An den Wänden hängen Seile und in der Mitte des Kletterbereichs ragt eine riesige blaue Hebebühne in den Hallenhimmel. Oben steht ein Routenschrauber und befestigt gerade ein großes Volumen an der Wand. Hier entsteht eine neue Tour. „Ich teste möglichst viele Routen selbst“, erklärt Ferdl. Nicht nur das Testen der Kletterrouten gehört zu seinem Verantwortungsbereich, sondern auch die Prüfung der Griffe, Wände

und Sicherungen. Natürlich sind die beiden nicht alleine: In der Halle arbeiten etwa 60 bis 80 Angestellte, die ihnen unter die Arme greifen und sich weitestgehend selbstständig um den Routenbau, das Sport- und Veranstaltungsangebot, den Gastro-Bereich, den Shop oder auch das Marketing kümmern. Die Möglichkeit, immer wieder selbst direkt mitzumischen, lassen sich die Leiter allerdings nicht nehmen. Ferdl: „Es ist wichtig, dass man alle Prozesse bis ins kleinste Detail versteht.“

KLETTERHALLENMANAGER – EIN VIelfÄLTIGES AUFGABENPORTFOLIO

Als Kletterhallenmanager müssen Oli und Ferdl vielseitig sein, denn ihr Arbeitsfeld ist es ebenso. An vorderster Stelle steht der Sportbetrieb.

act between the expectations of experienced climbers and those of parents looking to organize children's birthday parties is no mean feat. As the Bavarian state training center, the gym also serves as a training facility for top athletes and a venue for national and international competitions. The excitement surrounding popular events is another challenge, as the pair discovered last September during the Olympic Combined German Championships. The climbing gym managers also face a continuous stream of less visible tasks. From maintaining the ventilation system to inspecting the hire equipment, their work is never done. Having a large number of staff is imperative, and good personnel management holds the key to frictionless and professional teamwork. Although a bistro and climbing shop aren't essential in every climbing gym, Oli and Ferdl see them as part of their overall package. Successful marketing is vital, too, and to ensure it keeps attracting customers, the gym advertises its facilities on its website and social media as well as in local newspapers. Money, of course, also plays a crucial role. Keeping the gym's finances in check and making sure that its accounts are clear and transparent is all part and parcel of a gym manager's role. Performing this wide array of tasks is what the two managers do day in, day out.

"PASSION FOR WHAT YOU DO IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR"

„DAS ALLERWICHTIGSTE IST DIE BEGEISTERUNG FÜR DIE SACHE“

"You won't find this anywhere else," says Ferdl, demonstrating the new digital rating system for climbing routes. Located in the gym's outdoor area in a watertight plastic case, the small monitors display the difficulty levels of the various routes and can be reprogrammed centrally at any time. He helped develop it himself – like virtually every small detail in the gym, it bears the managers' mark. How do they keep on top of everything? "The most important thing is passion for what you do," explain Oli and Ferdl, strolling back towards the bistro. They pause for a moment to enjoy the sun's rays before saying goodbye and disappearing into the gym. "We still have a lot to do today."

Hier geht es nicht nur darum, kontinuierlich neue und spannende Kletterrouten zu schrauben. Auch ein kundenfreundliches Kursangebot will auf die Beine gestellt werden. Das reicht von der Konzeption der Kletterkurse über die Eintrittspreisgestaltung bis hin zum Aufbau eines kompetenten Trainer-Teams. Das ist leichter gesagt als getan, denn die Bandbreite der verschiedenen Nutzergruppen ist schier unendlich. Klettern ist Breitensport, und der Spagat zwischen den Erwartungen erfahrener Kletterer und Kindergeburtstags-Gruppen dementsprechend anspruchsvoll. Als Landesleistungszentrum Bayern eignet sich die Halle zudem als Trainingsstätte für Top-Athleten und als Austragungsort von nationalen und internationalen Wettkämpfen. Das Spektakel rund um die gut besuchten Events ist natürlich auch eine Herausforderung, wie es die beiden gerade vergangenen September anlässlich der Deutschen Meisterschaft Olympic Combined feststellen durften. Doch auch weniger sichtbare Aufgaben sind ständige Begleiter für die Leiter des Kletterzentrums: Sei es die Wartung der Lüftung oder die Prüfung des Leihmaterials – in einer Kletterhalle gibt es immer etwas zu tun. Viele Mitarbeitende sind da unerlässlich und gute Personalführung ist der Schlüssel für eine reibungslose sowie professionelle Zusammenarbeit. Ein Bistro und ein Kletter-Shop sind zwar nicht zwingende Bestandteile jeder Kletterhalle, gehören für Oli und Ferdl allerdings zum Gesamtpaket. Auch Marketing ist hier eine Kernkompetenz. Das bereitstehende Angebot will schließlich auf der Homepage, den sozialen Netzwerken und in den Lokalzeitungen beworben werden, denn sonst bleibt die Kundschaft womöglich aus. Und letztendlich geht es auch ums Geld: Der Überblick über die Finanzen und eine übersichtliche, transparente Buchhaltung gehören einfach dazu. Dieser bunten Aufgabenpalette gerecht zu werden, ist für die Betriebsleiter der tägliche Anspruch.

„Das hier gibt's sonst nirgends“, erklärt Ferdl und zeigt im Außenbereich das neue digitale Bewertungssystem für Kletterrouten. In einem wasserdichten Plastikgehäuse zeigen die kleinen Monitore die Schwierigkeiten der Linien und können jederzeit zentral umprogrammiert werden. Er selbst hat es mitentwickelt – beinahe jedes Detail trägt auch die Handschrift der Kletterhallenmanager. Wie also ist das alles zu schaffen? „Das Allerwichtigste ist eine Begeisterung für die Sache“, erklären Oli und Ferdl, während sie jetzt wieder in Richtung Bistro schlendern. Kurz die Sonne genießen, dann verabschieden sie sich und verschwinden in der Halle. „Wir haben heute noch eine Menge zu tun.“

QUALIFIKATION "BETRIEBSLEITUNG FÜR KÜNSTLICHE KLETTERANLAGEN"



Ab kommendem Jahr bietet der DAV die Ausbildung zum Kletterhallenmanager/zur Kletterhallenmanagerin an. Der erste Ausbildungszyklus startet in der zweiten Jahreshälfte 2020. Als Ausbildungszeit sind sechs Wochen innerhalb von eineinhalb Jahren vorgesehen. Die Ausbildung schließt mit einer Prüfung und einer Lizenz ab. Das Ziel ist die Qualifizierung der Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer in einer fünfstufigen Modulreihe in folgenden Handlungsfeldern:

- **Modul I Sportbetrieb** (Kursbetrieb, Routenbau, Veranstaltungen, Ausrüstungsverleih, Krisen- und Risikomanagement)
- **Modul II Kommunikation und Marketing** (Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Kundengewinnung und -bindung, Angebotsvermarktung)
- **Modul III Wirtschaftlicher Betrieb** (Finanzplanung, Controlling, Rechnungslegung)
- **Modul IV Technischer Betrieb** (Gebäude- und Kletterwandmanagement, Arbeitssicherheit, Gastronomie und Fachartikelverkauf, EDV)
- **Modul V Personalführung und -verwaltung** (Personalführung, Personalentwicklung und -verwaltung, Erkennen von Gruppenprozessen, Mitarbeiterkommunikation, Selbstreflexion)

Alle Anfragen bitte per E-Mail an Tanja.Ganz@alpenverein.de.



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SMART BRANDING

IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

IST DER SCHLÜSSEL ZUM ERFOLG

TEXT & PHOTOS: HANNES HUCH

◆ *Eat this: "People do not buy goods and services. They buy relations, stories, and magic." Just let this quote from Seth Godin sink in for a few moments. For me, these words from the American marketing guru perfectly sum up the essence of good branding. Of course, it's vital to deliver the right product at the right time for the right price and in the right place to the right customer. But that alone isn't enough. Why is it, for instance, that the staff in one bar can be rushed off their feet while in another similar location next door, they have all the time in the world to upload photos to their Instagram feed? In an increasingly competitive and even crowded climbing gym market, where most establishments offer similar facilities, it is no longer sufficient to blithely reset the routes, keep the restrooms spick and span, and stand smiling at reception waiting for customers. The success of these businesses rests more and more on the extent to which they trigger positive emotions in their customers and allow "relations, stories, and magic" to be created.*

Of course, there are still people belonging to an old school of thought who believe in **homo economicus**, the rational economic human who chooses the best offer by looking at facts alone. But can the decision to pay a much higher price for an Apple Mac as opposed to a Dell computer or for a Porsche 911 as opposed to a VW Passat really be justified on the basis of rational reasons such as immensely better quality? Neuroscientists say that this is obviously not the case. They argue that a Porsche fires up so many emotions in people that its driver automatically feels like a winner. And a Mac tells the rest of the world that its user is a quirky, creative, out-of-the-box thinker who breaks with the norm every single day.

Countless studies always come to the same conclusion. People – with the exception of a few enlightened monks – only ever appear to make conscious decisions, whereas in reality they are driven by their gut instincts and emotions or, in scientific terms, their limbic system. Neuromarketing experts talk of "functional" versus "emotional drivers" that prompt people to make a (purchase) decision. Depending on the study, emotional drivers influence 75 to 90 percent of the decision-making process and therefore completely overshadow functional factors.

With good brands, the emotional added value is immediately recognizable and, above all, tangible – with all the senses. At the end of the day, "it is inevitably easier to remember something that gets under your skin. This is because in such cases neuroplastic transmitters are released that support the formation of new connections." (Gerald Hüther, Professor of Neurobiology).

Essentially, a good brand is one that gives the customer a good gut feeling about a product, service, or organization. But how can you ensure these neurotransmitters are released in the minds of potential customers? And is it worth investing money in something as seemingly immeasurable as branding and marketing in the first place? I think it is – and good old Henry Ford agrees with me: "For every dollar you put into your business, you need to have another one ready to advertise it."

◆ *Eat this: „Menschen kaufen keine Güter oder Dienstleistungen, sondern Beziehungen, Geschichten und Magie.“ Diesen Slogan Seth Godins sollte man sich ein paar ruhige Augenblicke lang auf der Zunge zergehen lassen. Godin, ein US-amerikanischer Marketing-Guru, bringt damit meines Erachtens den Kern guten Brandings auf den Punkt. Natürlich ist es entscheidend das richtige Produkt zum richtigen Zeitpunkt zum richtigen Preis am richtigen Ort an den richtigen Kunden zu bringen. Aber das alleine reicht eben nicht aus. Denn warum stehen sich in der einen Bar die Menschen gegenseitig die Füße platt, während in einer ähnlichen Location eine Tür weiter der Kellner alle Zeit der Welt hat seinen Instagram-Feed zu füttern? In einem zunehmend von Wettbewerb und sogar Verdrängung bestimmten Kletterhallen-Markt mit ähnlichen Angeboten ist es nicht mehr genug nur fröhlich umzuschrauben, brav die Sanitärräume zu wienern und lächelnd an der Kasse auf Kunden zu warten. Der Erfolg einer solchen Einrichtung wird zunehmend davon bestimmt, inwieweit sie es schafft beim Kunden positive Emotionen auszulösen und „Beziehungen, Geschichten und Magie“ entstehen zu lassen.*

Es gibt zwar immer noch Menschen alten Schlages, die an den **homo oeconomicus** glauben, der rein faktenbasiert das für ihn optimale Angebot wählt. Aber lässt sich der wesentlich höhere Preis eines Apple-Rechners gegenüber dem Dell-Computer oder der eines Porsche 911 gegenüber einem VW Passat wirklich mit rationalen Gründen, etwa einer immens besseren Produktqualität, rechtfertigen? Neuro-Wissenschaftler sagen: Nein, natürlich nicht! Sie argumentieren, dass der Porsche derart stark emotional aufgeladen wurde, dass sich der Fahrer darin automatisch wie ein Gewinner fühlt. Und der Apple-Rechner signalisiert der Umwelt, dass sein Benutzer ein irre kreativer Out-of-the-box-Denker ist, der tagtäglich von rechts überholt.

Unzählige Studien kommen zu dem immer gleichen Ergebnis: Der Mensch trifft nur scheinbar bewusst Entscheidungen (von ein paar wenigen erleuchteten Mönchen mal abgesehen), in Wirklichkeit entscheidet sein Bauchgefühl und seine limbische Disposition. Das Neuro-Marketing spricht hier von „funktionalen“ versus „emotionalen Treibern“, die zu einer (Kauf-)Entscheidung führen. Und je nach Studie sind an dieser Entscheidung 75 bis 90 Prozent emotionale Treiber beteiligt, während für die funktionalen der klägliche Rest übrig bleibt.

Bei guten Marken ist der emotionale Mehrwert sofort erkennbar und vor allem: fühlbar, mit allen Sinnen. Denn „alles, was unter die Haut geht, wird zwangsläufig besser abgespeichert. Das hängt damit zusammen, dass dabei neuroplastische Botenstoffe ausgeschüttet werden, die die Herausbildung von neuen Vernetzungen begünstigen“ (Gerald Hüther, Prof. der Neurobiologie).

Im Grunde ist eine gute Marke ein gutes Bauchgefühl des Kunden über ein Produkt, eine Dienstleistung oder eine Organisation. Doch wie schafft man es beim potentiellen Kunden diese Botenstoffe zur Ausschüttung zu bringen? Und ist es überhaupt das Geld wert in so etwas scheinbar Unmessbares wie Branding und Marketing zu investieren? Ich denke schon und der gute alte Henry Ford ist mit mir: „Wenn Sie einen Dollar in Ihr Unternehmen stecken wollen, so müssen Sie einen weiteren bereithalten, um das bekannt zu machen.“

“ESSENTIALLY, A GOOD BRAND IS ONE THAT GIVES THE CUSTOMER A GOOD GUT FEELING ABOUT A PRODUCT, SERVICE, OR ORGANIZATION.”

„IM GRUNDE IST EINE GUTE MARKE EIN GUTES BAUCHGEFÜHL DES KUNDEN ÜBER EIN PRODUKT, EINE DIENSTLEISTUNG ODER EINE ORGANISATION.“

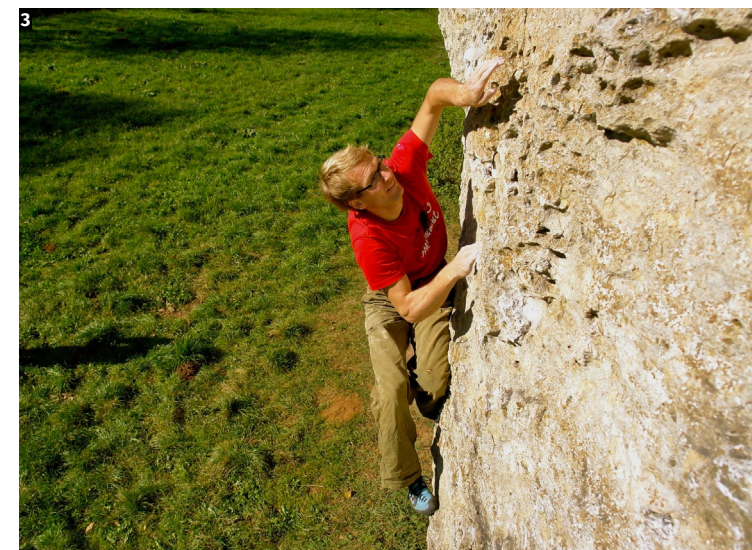


Photo: Thomas Ballenberger

At the start of the design process, you should ask yourself the following: "Why do you do what you do?" From an entrepreneurial point of view, a substantial benefit of having a clear answer to this question is not only that it allows you to present a finely honed profile to your future customers, but that it also provides your staff with a great deal of guidance. This alone demonstrates that far from being just a little something for the eyes, brand design goes hand in hand with fundamental strategic decisions. I don't like to admit it, but the Americans are a good step ahead of us Europeans in this respect, yet again. In fact, "Why do you do what you do?" was the exact topic addressed by the keynote at this year's Climbing Wall Summit in Colorado.

As the founder and long-standing CMO (= chief marketing officer, cough, cough) of the Café Kraft climbing gym in Nuremberg, Germany,

Zu Beginn des Designprozesses steht die Frage: „Warum tust Du, was Du tust?“ Aus unternehmerischer Sicht ist ein ganz wesentlicher Benefit darin zu sehen, dass eine gute Antwort auf diese Frage nicht nur den späteren Kunden ein geschärftes Profil präsentiert. Sondern dass es auch intern unter den Angestellten für ungemein viel Orientierung sorgt, wenn der Gründer oder die Gründerin darauf eine klare Antwort geben kann. Daraus wird bereits ersichtlich, dass Brand-Design kein rein visueller Zuckerguss ist, sondern Hand in Hand mit grundlegenden strategischen Entscheidungen geht. Ich gebe es ungern zu, aber die US-Amerikaner sind uns Europäern diesbezüglich schon wieder einen guten Schritt voraus. Denn genau darum drehte sich beispielsweise die Keynote beim diesjährigen Climbing Wall Summit (dem großen Branchentreffen des Kletterhallen-Business) in Colorado: „Why do you do what you do?“



I'm certainly no oracle on the matter. However, I like to think that we've got a few things right and that we've done really well in putting things on the right track. I believe that this climbing gym provides a good example of a meaningful branding strategy and that there are a few bright ideas to be taken from it.

From day one, we set ourselves the objective of creating an emotional bond with our customers. After all, customers who are connected to a company in this way even stay loyal when times are tough, i.e. when the competition sets up shop around the corner and the initial hype is fading. Before describing the individual steps we took, here's a recap of the benefits of good corporate branding:

- Corporate branding is a prerequisite for successful corporate communications of any kind.
- Corporate branding is a visual depiction of a company's culture, values, objectives, and market prowess.
- These days, corporate branding is the only means of succeeding on the market amid a sea of advertising and information.
- Corporate branding signals consistent corporate communications, building credibility and trust.
- Well-designed and well-organized corporate branding creates synergies and allows individual communications to be easily attributed to the brand in question.

From the very beginning, our aim was to demonstrate how we are unique. To achieve this, we made use of a stylistic device that you can't really avoid in marketing these days – storytelling. Storytelling is a fantastic way of presenting a brand's emotional components because it allows you to take your customers on a journey. Since as early as the Stone Ages, people have been turning their experiences and fantasies into stories as a way of sharing them with others. A good story goes straight to your heart, can be retold again and again, and is a brilliant way of turning customers into fans. Who doesn't love being gripped by an exciting story? Stories are much easier for the human brain to process than dry facts and activate it much more fully. This is due to the way in which stories create pictures in the listener's mind and are much easier to remember than written facts. As put so brilliantly in Alice in Wonderland: "The adventures first. Explanations take such a dreadful time."

"STORIES ARE MUCH EASIER FOR THE HUMAN BRAIN TO PROCESS THAN DRY FACTS."

„GESCHICHTEN SIND FÜR DAS MENSCHLICHE GEHIRN VIEL LEICHTER ZU VERARBEITEN ALS TROCKENE FAKTEN“

Als Gründer und langjähriger CMO (= Chief Marketing Officer, hüstel hüstel) der Nürnberger Kletterhalle Café Kraft behaupte ich gewiss nicht die Weisheit mit Löffeln gefressen zu haben. Trotzdem denke ich, dass einige Dinge dort richtig und richtig gut in die Wege geleitet wurden. Und dass es exemplarisch für eine sinnvolle Branding-Strategie steht, aus der man ein paar

gute Ideen ableiten kann.

Das Ziel war es stets und von Tag eins an eine emotionale Bindung zum Kunden aufzubauen. Denn Kunden, die Deinem Unternehmen derart verbunden sind, bleiben es auch in schwierigen Zeiten, sprich wenn die Konkurrenz um die Ecke biegt und der Hype im Sinkflug ist. Bevor ich nun zu den einzelnen Schritten unserer Herangehensweise komme, hier noch einmal der Nutzen eines guten Corporate-Brandings für das Unternehmen:

- Das Corporate-Branding ist Voraussetzung für jegliche Form erfolgreicher Unternehmenskommunikation.
- Das Corporate-Branding visualisiert Kultur, Wertvorstellungen, Unternehmensziele und Marktcompetenz.
- Das Corporate-Branding ist heute die einzige Möglichkeit, um sich in der Flut von Werbung und Informationen am Markt durchzusetzen.
- Das Corporate-Branding signalisiert Kontinuität in der Unternehmenskommunikation. Dies schafft Glaubwürdigkeit und Vertrauen.
- Das gut gestaltete und organisierte Corporate-Branding setzt Synergieeffekte frei und erzeugt einen hohen Wiedererkennungswert einzelner Kommunikationsmaßnahmen.

Unser Ziel war es von Anfang an Einzigartigkeit zu demonstrieren. Dazu bedienten wir uns eines Stilmittels, um das man im Marketing heutzutage kaum mehr drum herum kommt – dem Storytelling. Mit dem Storytelling lassen sich die emotionalen Komponenten einer Marke ideal darstellen, denn dadurch nimmst Du den Kunden mit auf eine Reise. Bereits seit der Steinzeit verarbeiten Menschen Erlebtes und Phantasievolles in Geschichten, um dies mit anderen Menschen zu teilen. Eine gute Geschichte geht unmittelbar unter die Haut, wird gerne weitererzählt und ist ein großartiges Mittel um Kunden zu Fans zu machen. Wer lässt sich nicht gerne von einer spannenden Geschichte fesseln? Geschichten sind für das menschliche Gehirn viel leichter zu verarbeiten als trockene Fakten und aktivieren es deutlich umfassender. Das



SO, LET'S WRITE HISTORY!

In the case of Café Kraft, the idea was to integrate our passion for the history of climbing in the German region of Franconia into the climbing gym by making it perceptible and tangible. Like every good story, we firstly needed strong main characters with whom our target audience could easily identify. What would Mission Impossible be without Ethan Hunt? How about Rambo without John Rambo? And what would our story about Franconia be without Wolfgang Güllich and Kurt Albert (picture 1)? They were our obvious choice of lead characters (a decision, by the way, for which Wolfgang's father, Dr. Fritz Güllich, thanked me in person), for they embodied the perfect trilogy of camaraderie, a passion for climbing, and a love of life. And, bingo, we had our brand values! Because – and here's another wisecrack from the world of marketing – "brands are like people." They determine how your brand talks (tonality), looks (visual characteristics), what music it listens to, and what jokes it makes (personal characteristics).

We couldn't have chosen a better name than Café Kraft. The original Café Kraft in Franconia's Pegnitztal valley was not only THE place to be during the heyday of redpointing, but also perfectly expresses the attitude to life we wanted to convey: physical activity and socializing in equal measure.

So, in a nutshell, our story focuses on our passion for the history of climbing in Franconia, the main characters are Wolfgang and Kurt, and our name is the place where the action happens: Café Kraft (picture 2). And that's our story ready to be told!

Every entrepreneur must be familiar with their own story. They must bring this story to life with utter conviction in order to win over both their staff and customers. And storytelling is a fantastic way of achieving this. In an ideal scenario, you want your brand to develop into a kind of religion, as has happened with Apple.

You can only move on to crafting visual design elements once your story and characters are in place. Branding is about much more than cobbling together a logo and pairing it with some trendy colors. It's important to remember that a logo is not a brand.

Franconian Switzerland has a very green and organic look and feel (picture 3). We chose bright green mats and brown walls to convey its organic nature. This was unique, or at least it was back in 2011 (picture 4). One of the challenges we set for ourselves was to bring the coziness and hospitality of Franconian inns alive in our gym. To do this, we furnished it with sofas of the type you might have found in your grand-

wiederum liegt daran, dass Geschichten im Kopf des Zuhörers Bilder entstehen lassen und Bilder nun mal viel leichter zu merken sind als Fakten in Buchstabenform. Wie heißt es so schön bei „Alice im Wunderland“? „Die Abenteuergeschichten zuerst, bitte. Erklärungen brauchen immer so schrecklich lange.“

ALSO: LASS UNS GESCHICHTE SCHREIBEN!

Im Fall des Café Krafts war die Idee, unsere Begeisterung für die fränkische Klettergeschichte in die Halle zu integrieren, sie erleb- und fühlbar zu machen. Zunächst einmal braucht jede gute Geschichte starke Hauptcharaktere, mit denen man sich gerne identifiziert. Was wäre Mission Impossible ohne Ethan Hunt? Was Rambo ohne John Rambo? Und was wäre die Fränkische ohne Wolfgang Güllich und Kurt Albert (Bild 1)? Natürlich wurden sie unsere Lead Characters (wofür sich übrigens der Vater von Wolfgang, Dr. Fritz Güllich, persönlich bei mir bedankte), denn sie lebten die perfekte Trilogie aus Kameradschaft, Kletterleidenschaft sowie Lebensfreude. Und schwupps! hatten wir damit auch schon unsere Markenwerte, denn – noch so ein krachendes Bonmot aus dem Marketingslang – „Brands are like people“. Sie bestimmen, wie Deine Marke spricht (Tonalität), ausschaut (visueller Charakter) sowie welche Musik sie hört oder welche Witze sie macht (persönliche Eigenschaften).

Einen besseren Namen als „Café Kraft“ hätten wir gar nicht finden können, denn das originale Café Kraft im fränkischen Pegnitztal war einerseits DER Szenetreffpunkt in der Blütezeit des Rotpunkt-Kletterns, andererseits drückt er in idealer Weise das Lebensgefühl aus, welches wir vermitteln wollten: körperliche Aktivität und Geselligkeit auf gleichberechtigtem Niveau.

Also: Unsere Geschichte ist die fränkische Klettergeschichte, für die wir brennen. Die Hauptdarsteller sind Wolfgang und Kurt, unser Name ist der Handlungsort der Geschichte: Café Kraft (Bild 2). Die Story steht!

Jeder Unternehmer muss seine Geschichte kennen. Er oder sie muss diese Geschichte mit voller Überzeugung verkörpern, um sowohl die Angestellten als auch die Kunden zu überzeugen. Und Storytelling ist ein fantastischer Weg, damit das gelingt. Im Idealfall entsteht, siehe Apple, eine Art von Glaubensgemeinschaft.

Erst, wenn die Story und der Charakter stehen, geht es an die visuelle Umsetzung. Einfach mal mit einem Logo und gerade angesagten Farben loszulegen, die irgendwie was hermachen, ist kein Markenaufbau! A logo is not a brand.



ma's house and vintage-style, fringed lampshades. Admittedly, however, it was difficult to hit just the right level of hideousness (picture 5)!

Franconian Switzerland boasts a couple of signature rocks, such as the Waldkopf, where the Action Directe is located. We therefore gave each of our areas a memorable name, very closely based on its original counterpart. The photo shows Chris Sharma warming up on the artificial Waldkopf in preparation for tackling the real thing (picture 6). Does it get any better than that?

The most famous innovation from this region is undeniably the red point that Kurt Albert began to paint on the rocks in the mid-1970s as a way to mark routes he had free climbed (picture 7). His friend Norbert Sandner was also involved in this and together they revolutionized sport climbing. It was an honor to have the very same Norbert Sandner paint a genuine red point on the Waldkopf (picture 8).

The Franconian flag features a striking zigzag and it was only natural for us to reflect this in the Café Kraft logo. As for the lettering, Marion Hett designed this organically using just a pencil (main picture).

The photo of our main characters shaking hands is positioned in pride of place at the entrance to the gym so that our customers can unconsciously pick up on our brand story as soon as they step foot inside. All of my dreams as a CMO came true when the photographer of this iconic image, Thomas Ballenberger, commemorated the handshake with a climber from the same period, Stefan Glowacz, in front of the photo (picture 10).

There are many other examples in the same vein, all the way down to our oak wood business cards, which allow customers to experience the Café Kraft sensation with their hands (picture 11).

Das Look & Feel der Fränkischen Schweiz ist ein sehr grünes und organisches (Bild 3). Wir wählten knallgrüne Matten und braune Wände, um dieses organische Gefühl zu kreieren. Das war, zumindest 2011, einzigartig (Bild 4). Eine der Herausforderungen war es, die Gemütlichkeit der fränkischen Gasthäuser in unserem Gym aufleben zu lassen.

Wir entschieden uns für Altoma-Sofas sowie Bommellampen, wobei es zugegebenermaßen gar nicht so einfach war, den optimalen Grad an Scheußlichkeit zu finden (Bild 5).

Die Fränkische hat einige Signature-Felsen, wie zum Beispiel den Waldkopf, an dem sich die Action Directe befindet. Wir wählten deshalb für jeden Sektor einen markanten Namen, der seinem Original-Pendant

recht nahe kommt. Im Bild wärmt sich übrigens Chris Sharma grad am Kunst-Waldkopf auf, um danach zum echten in die Fränkische aufzubrechen (Bild 6). Geht es besser?

Die berühmteste Innovation aus diesem Gebiet ist sicherlich der rote Punkt, den Kurt Albert Mitte der Siebziger begann an die Felsen zu pinseln, um damit freie Begehungen zu markieren (Bild 7). Dabei war sein Kumpel Norbert Sandner mit von der Partie und gemeinsam revolutionierten sie damit den Klettersport. Es war ein Ehrentag, als just dieser Norbert Sandner einen waschechten roten Punkt an den Waldkopf pinselte (Bild 8).

Die Fahne der Franken hat die markante Zackenform, die sich logischerweise auch im Logo des Café Krafts widerspiegelte. Der Schriftzug selber wurde von Marion Hett organisch mit dem Zeichenstift designed (Titelbild).

Das Shakehands-Bild unserer Hauptdarsteller ist prominent am Eingang platziert, damit Kunden unterbewusst gleich von Anfang an Witterung mit dieser Brandstory aufnehmen können. Alle Träume des CMOs gehen natürlich in Erfüllung, wenn der Fotograf dieses ikonischen Fotos, Thomas Ballenberger, mit dem Zeitzeugen Stefan Glowacz just dort den Shakehand feiert (Bild 10).

Und so geht es weiter bis ins kleinste Detail, bis zur Visitenkarte aus Eichenholz: So lässt sich das Gefühl Café Kraft auch mit dem Tastsinn erfahren (Bild 11).

"THE DESIGN PROCESS CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM A GYM'S STRATEGY."

„DER DESIGN-PROZESS IST NICHT VON DER STRATEGIE LOSGELÖST ZU SEHEN.“



NOW WE HAVE OUR STORY, OUR CHARACTERISTICS, AND OUR LOOK AND FEEL. NEXT WE NEED TO MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES...

You could do this by selling your body but, let me tell you, the constant dieting is far too much work (picture 12)! Instead, we preferred to opt for a mix of social media and traditional printed materials so that we could promote ourselves uniformly both on and offline. The benefit of a consistent process like this is that our communication activities pick up naturally from where our earlier campaigns leave off. With friendship, a passion for climbing, and a love of life as our brand's characteristics, it is as clear as day that our communications need to use informal language. We've also discovered that a sure-fired way of going viral is to film energetic old-timers who still have a passion for the sport (picture 13). Finally, instead of promoting ourselves with pictures of dorks who look as if they are suffering from a headache, we rely, for example, on our vlog model Miriam Blättler with #positivetrainingvibes (picture 14).

LET'S RETURN TO OUR INITIAL QUESTION OF WHO REALLY NEEDS THIS.

Not every backwater climbing gym has to employ a ten-strong marketing team to make themselves known around the world. However, I hope I have successfully explained that the design process cannot be separated from a gym's strategy. If anything, a convincing design strategy requires an equally meaningful corporate strategy. And asking yourself daily "Why do I do what I do?" is crucial to ensure your business enjoys lasting success.

Another case in point for the importance of design is provided by The Business Value of Design study, published by global consulting firm McKinsey in late 2018, which investigated the impact of design on economic success. As part of its investigation, McKinsey surveyed 300 companies from a range of countries and industries over a period of five years and evaluated large quantities of financial data as well as more than 100,000 design actions. An example of a design action includes putting a designer on the executive board. The results were used to compile the McKinsey Design Index (MDI), which ranks companies based on how strongly they have integrated design into their business. The study clearly demonstrated that design-driven companies, i.e. those in the

HANNES HUCH
 Born: 1974
 Lives in: Nuremberg, Germany
 Background: Designer, Degree in photo design



HANNES HUCH

Hannes was born in the extremely flat Lower Rhine region of Germany, and was having to make do with various concrete bridges when he discovered that climbing was his passion in the 1980s. After studying photo design, he originally wanted to become a jet-setting fashion photographer but his love of all things vertical was stronger. Since 2000, he's been living in awesome Franconian Switzerland in Bavaria with his awesome wife and awesome kid. Together with his wife Marion Hett, he advises companies on how to make an impact with words and visual elements.

Hannes wurde am völlig felsarmen Niederrhein geboren und behalf sich in den Achtzigern mit diversen Betonbrücken, als er entdeckte, dass Klettern sein Weg ist. Eigentlich wollte er nach dem Foto-Design-Studium ein jetsettender Mode-Fotograf werden, aber die Leidenschaft für die Vertikale war größer. Seit 2000 lebt er in der tollen Fränkischen Schweiz mit toller Frau und tollem Kind. Zusammen mit seiner Frau Marion Hett berät er Unternehmen – mit Worten und mit visueller Umsetzung.

www.hetthuch.com

WIR HABEN DIE STORY, DEN CHARAKTER UND DAS LOOK & FEEL. JETZT MÜSSEN DIE LEUTE NUR NOCH DAVON ERFAHREN ...

Man kann beispielsweise seinen Körper dafür verkaufen, aber ich sage Euch: Das ist auf Dauer viel zu anstrengend, diese ewigen Diäten (Bild 12)! Wir entschieden uns lieber für einen Mix aus Social Media und analogen Printprodukten, denn wir ziehen zwischen On und Off keine Linie. Das Gute an einem derart konsequent durchgezogenen Prozess ist, dass sich die Kommunikation ganz natürlich aus dem vorher Erarbeiteten ergibt. Wenn Freundschaft, Kletterleidenschaft und Lebensfreude die Charakter-Eigenschaften der Marke sind, dann ist es sonnenklar, dass man per Du kommuniziert, virale Hits mit vitalen Kletter-Oldies erzielt (Bild 13) und keine trüben Tassen mit Kopfschmerzblick auf den Fotos sind, sondern zum Beispiel unser Vlog-Model Miriam Blättler mit #positivetrainingvibes (Bild 14).

NOCHMAL ZUR EINGANGSFRAGE: WER BRAUCHT DAS SCHON?

Nicht jede Kletterhalle in Pusemuckl braucht den Anspruch zu haben, rund um den Globus bekannt zu sein und deswegen ein zehnköpfiges Marketingteam zu beschäftigen. Wie ich jedoch hoffentlich überzeugend darstellen konnte, ist der Design-Prozess nicht von der Strategie losgelöst zu sehen. Vielmehr ist es so, dass eine überzeugende Design-Strategie nach einer ebenso sinnvollen Unternehmens-Strategie verlangt. Und sich tagtäglich mit der Frage zu konfrontieren „Warum tue ich, was ich tue?“ ist eine integrale Basis dauerhaften Erfolgs für Unternehmer.

Ein weiteres Argument für die Wichtigkeit des Designs ist die Ende 2018 veröffentlichte Studie „The Business Value of Design“ der bedeutenden Beratungsfirma McKinsey, in der der Beitrag von Design zum wirtschaftlichen Erfolg untersucht wurde. Dafür befragte McKinsey 300 Unternehmen aus unterschiedlichen Ländern und Branchen über einen Zeitraum von fünf Jahren, wertete große Mengen von Finanzdaten aus sowie mehr als 100.000 „design actions“. Dazu zählt zum Beispiel, ob ein Designer in die Geschäftsleitung berufen wurde. Auf dieser Grundlage entstand der McKinsey Design Index (MDI), der Firmen danach rankt, wie stark sie Design integriert haben. Dabei wurde glasklar festgestellt: Designgetriebene Unternehmen, also diejenigen, die im oberen Quartal des MDI liegen, steigerten sowohl ihre Erlöse als auch ihre Rendite im Untersuchungszeitraum deutlich stärker als ihre Mitbewerber - und das in sämtlichen unter die Lupe genommenen Branchen!

top quarter of the MDI, saw much greater increases in their revenues and returns during the five-year period than their competitors – and this was the case for all the industries examined!

A good brand story, by the way, does not only look to the past. It is constantly evolving and new chapters are always being added. Plus, it invites your customers to play a supporting role. It not only inspires people online, but in the gym itself or perhaps in a printed magazine (in our case, DIE KRAFT, picture 15).

As I've explained, the most important thing is that the company's managers bring this story to life, too. Day in and day out – with complete authenticity and conviction. Like Apple's Steve Jobs, who so aptly said, "The storyteller is the most important person in the world. He sets the vision, values, and agenda of an entire generation that is to come."

Now this is what makes big things happen!

11



13



12



14



15



Eine gute Brandstory lebt im übrigen nicht nur aus der Vergangenheit. Sie wird ständig fortgeschrieben und weiter entwickelt. Sie lädt den Kunden ein, sich daran zu beteiligen. Sie inspiriert nicht nur im Internet, sondern direkt in der Halle oder auch in einem gedruckten Magazin („DIE KRAFT“, Bild 15).

Wie Du siehst, ist das allerwichtigste, dass die Führungsetage diese Geschichte lebt. Tag für Tag - mit voller Authentizität und Überzeugung. Wie Steve Jobs bei Apple, der so treffend formulierte: „The storyteller is the most important person in the world. He sets the vision, values and agenda of an entire generation that is to come.“

Dann können große Dinge geschehen!

MARION HETT



The brains behind the design strategy

The Café Kraft brand owes a lot of its success to corporate brand designer Marion Hett (MA in communication design), who has helped businesses like Monkee and a whole host of others to make a name for themselves. Drawing on the experience she gained while working for an international agency in Amsterdam, she immediately recognized the potential of this Franconian climbing gym and developed a corporate identity that has since become known all around the world.

Der Kopf hinter der Design-Strategie

Ganz wesentlich ist der Erfolg der Marke Café Kraft der Verdienst Marion Hett's (Dipl. MA. Kommunikationsdesignerin), die als Corporate Brand Designerin schon Marken wie Monkee und vielen anderen zum Erfolg verholphen hat. Aufgrund ihrer Arbeitserfahrung in einer international operierenden Amsterdamer Agentur erkannte sie von Beginn an das Potential, das in dieser fränkischen Kletterhalle steckte, und entwickelte eine mittlerweile weltweit bekannte Corporate Identity.



Photo: The Climbing Hangar

CUSTOMER RETENTION

MARKETING YOUR CLIMBING GYM

TEXT: ALEXANDER HOLZMANN

◆ **Climbing has been growing organically at a very strong rate for a number of years now, with the latest data pointing to over 30 million climbers worldwide and a 6–27% increase in the number of gyms in key markets such as Germany, the United States of America and France between 2010 and 2017(*). With climbing set to make its debut appearance at the Olympic Games in 2020, most industry participants believe that this growth will continue over the next few years, bringing with it a number of changes to climbing as a sport and to related industries.**

Until a few years ago, hard-core climbers were the main target group for many gym owners. Today, however, more and more people in metropolitan areas are beginning to climb indoors, at times far away from any outdoor rock-climbing areas, and many will continue to climb exclusively indoors. While, historically, indoor climbing was mostly seen as a training ground for outdoor rock climbing, nowadays indoor climbing gyms are increasingly used as a way to stay in shape. As such, they find themselves competing with other fitness gyms, leading to a number of changes in

the business model itself. For example, climbing may be offered alongside other activities such as yoga, ninja parkour, free weights and

for indoor gyms becomes very clear. According to The Climbing Hangar, retention is deemed to have occurred if climbers come back for a

skateboarding. In the United States of America, 74% of climbing gyms already offer activities other than just climbing (source: CWA).

According to a study by CWA, in the USA, climbing gyms generate 41% of their earnings from memberships, making this area the most important source of revenue for gyms by far (with day passes ranking in second position, accounting for around 20% less of their earnings). A reference study by global management consultancy Bain & Company found that if a company managed to increase its customer retention rate by 5%, its profits would increase by as much as 25–95% across different industries. With this information in mind, the importance of customer retention

second visit. Currently, the customer retention rate in indoor gyms is around 30%.

“Retention is the most important metric,” says Ged MacDomhnaill from The Climbing Hangar. “People walking through your front door is the most difficult thing for a business to achieve and you have low levels of control over this – getting them to come back is the most important thing that you have control over. If you can’t persuade people to come back, it is a major warning sign that you are getting things wrong.”

The quality of route setting, as discussed in various articles of this magazine, is one of the key factors in determining whether a climb-

“IF A COMPANY MANAGED TO INCREASE ITS CUSTOMER RETENTION RATE BY 5%, ITS PROFITS WOULD INCREASE BY AS MUCH AS 25–95%”

* Lars Becker / Ispo, Indoor Climbing: Five trends for the future. URL: <https://www.ispo.com/en/trends/indoor-climbing-5-trends-marketing>



Photo: Dan Bentley

GED MACDOMHNAILL

Born: 1981

Lives in: Liverpool

Background: BaHons Journalism, PGCE Secondary Education, Founder & CEO from The Climbing Hangar

ing gym will succeed or fail, as it considerably influences customer retention. But there are also other measures you can take to increase retention rates.

According to figures in a recent survey of climbers by Vertical-Life, the vast majority of lifetime climbers climb both indoors and outdoors. Only 2% of these climbers said that they only climbed indoors. Experiencing climbing outdoors is key to developing a true passion for the sport. Therefore, creating possibilities for newbies to connect with and integrate into the core climbing community is likely an important aspect for retaining climbers.

“For us, member retention comes down to whether customers find a sense of community at our gym,” says Matt Moore from Stone Age Climbing Gym. “We personally enjoy our gym experience more when we’re surrounded by familiar faces and good conversation. Knowing that, when a new member finds that community feel, they’re more likely to stay a member longer. We focus on training our staff and offering programs that help develop a sense of community in our gym.”

A look at the adjacent sector of fitness gyms reveals that customer retention has long been labeled as the holy grail of achieving business success. Recent studies suggest that group classes in particular have a positive effect on keeping customers around, reflected in a reasonably higher retention rate for gyms



MATT MOORE

Born: 1987

Lives in: Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

Background: General Manager, Stone Age Climbing Gym; MBA '14

* American Association of Fitness Clubs

adopting this approach (75.9%) compared with traditional fitness clubs (71.4%)*. In particular, the younger Generation Z and Millennials are very interested in such offers. One of the main reasons why group classes are so popular is the sense of commu-

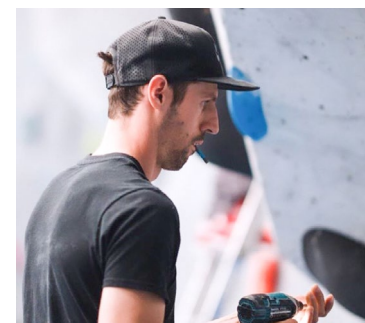
nity participants feel. Offering courses and activities at climbing gyms to satisfy this need may be another way to get climbers to stay.

In addition to engaging customers through personal contact, software tools and smartphone applications in particular can be used to enhance climbers’ experience both during and outside of their gym visit. These may provide customers with information, increase engagement or collect feedback, or even notify climbers about newly set routes and climbing courses. Gyms can share this information even when climbers are not in the gym, creating opportunities to stay connected to the climbers on different levels. Interactive tools can increase the fun factor and provide additional motivation by allowing climbers to take part in circuits, challenges and events. Other tools or software might allow climbers to keep a log of their climbs, fulfilling their desire to document and track their progress. At the same time, this provides feedback to gyms, which can use this infor-

mation to improve their route setting. Providing a platform for climbers to interact with each other and follow each other’s achievements can create a great sense of community and a friendly competitive atmosphere.

Overall, software tools can allow new climbers to connect to the sport more quickly and find their way into the community or help experienced climbers climb more consistently. Dan Knight from The Climbing Hangar points out, however, that “there is no one trick, but [rather it is] the whole package that makes a gym an incredible experience for climbers. What doesn’t work is treating your gym like a private members’ club for you and your buddies and ignoring or not seeking out customer feedback – especially when it is negative.”

Ultimately, many factors play a role in climber retention, including excellent route setting, staff interaction and engaging technology. Above all, when markets will get more saturated in the future, success is more likely to come to those gyms willing to try out, improve and then keep improving their customer retention approaches.

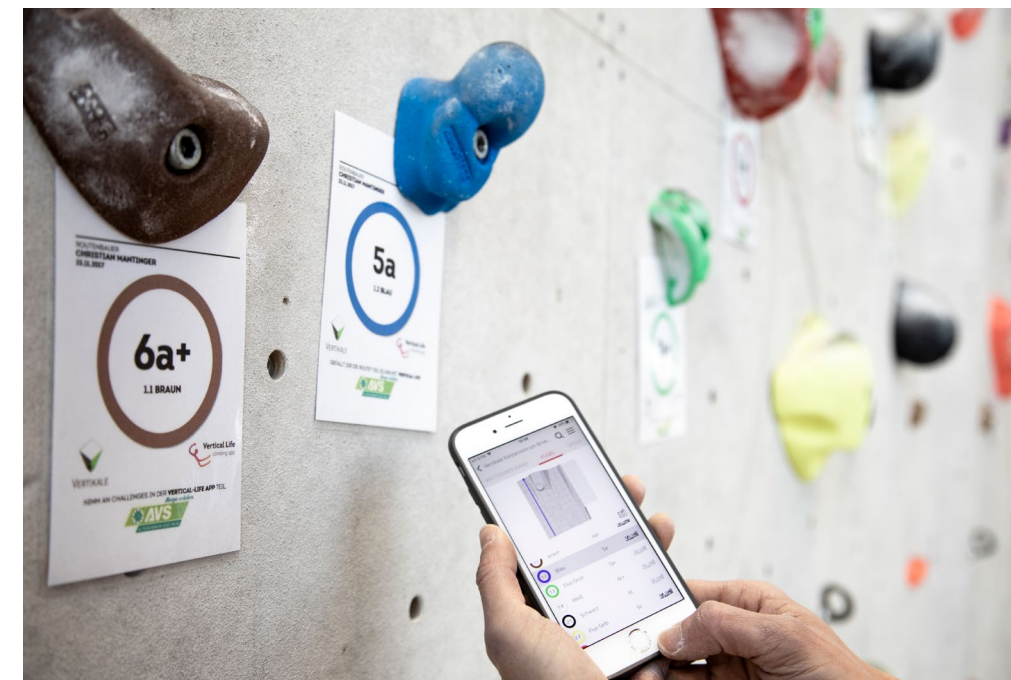


DANIEL KNIGHT

Born: 1984

Lives in: Cornwall, UK

Background: Director of Climbing for The Climbing Hangar, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Media and TV Production and degree in teaching



LISTEN TO THE ROCK

THE RISE OF CLIMBING IN CHINA

TEXT: ALESSANDRO USUELLI & ANG ZHANG / PHOTOS: LISTEN TO THE ROCK / MOKA CLIMB

Right now, indoor climbing in China is undergoing its greatest change since the first commercial climbing gym opened in Beijing in 1996.

The thrilling news that climbing would be making its Olympic debut at the Tokyo 2020 games was like throwing a rock into water – the ripple effect was huge. Since then, climbing has become increasingly popular, with recent developments pointing to great potential and a promising future for the sport.

China boasts a number of passionate and ambitious climbers. And support for the sport is abundant. The government is supporting the national team and promoting the sport of climbing through physical education courses at school, while an increasing number of private investors are interested in funding big commercial projects. There are even enthusiastic climbers who have put their own money into building their dream gyms, and former weekend climbers who quit their jobs to start working in the climbing market.

Meanwhile, new climbing walls are being built everywhere, from schools and parks to shopping malls and stadiums. A well-known tech tycoon, for example, spent millions on a wall

to form part of the company's interior design. Currently, there are 338 climbing venues and around 25,000 climbers in China. According to an official annual report on climbing in China in 2018, these numbers are estimated to reach 900 gyms and 100,000 active climbers by 2025. While these figures are positive, climbing

"IN MANY GYMS, THERE ARE CONSTANT COMPLAINTS ABOUT ROUTE SETTING NOT BEING BEGINNER-FRIENDLY ENOUGH."

in China is still in the early stages of development, particularly in certain regards. For example, the Chinese climbing scene still lacks professional route setters, especially in commercial settings such as gyms. In many gyms, there are constant complaints about route setting not being beginner-friendly enough. This is never the intention, but happens because commercial setting demands a whole new level of know-how. As a result, there is little emphasis on working to provide a positive climbing experience to beginners.

In turn, this does little to convince new customers to stick it out.

Some gym operators, however, appreciate the value of good route setting and are willing to invest in it. They may hire international route setters from Japan or other countries, for example, but this is not an affordable option for everyone.

BRINGING CLIMBERS AND ROUTE SETTERS CLOSER TOGETHER

The idea behind the Listen To The Rock event series was brought to life with the aim of solving this problem. Initially, "Listen to the Rock" was a slogan from E9, one of the main sponsors of the event. We decided to adopt the name for our initiative. Route setting is a process similar to bolting rock faces. You need to "listen" closely to the message of your holds and structure; they are your rock features. They provide inspiration for you to express your ideas. We at MOKA Climb aim at activating and connecting different resources in the climbing community in order to bring the climbing experience to the next level. We understand that it will take a lot of time and effort to change the current situation, but we

very much believe in the potential of commercial route setting in China. For us, it is a topic that deserves more attention.

Our event consists of two parts: a self-setting workshop for climbers and a fun bouldering competition. Before the event even starts, professional route setters set 80 percent of the competition's problems. For the workshop, the participating climbers are divided into teams of three. Their task is to set the remaining 20 percent of boulder problems, expressing their own creativity. The difficulty of these problems is restricted to grades V2 to V4. The professional route setters instruct and assist the climbers during this process.

"ROUTE SETTING SHOULD BE FUN AND ENJOYABLE FOR EVERYONE TO TRY"

In this fun competition, all participants climb together, the names of the route setters remaining anonymous. After the competition, the climbers are asked to vote for their favorite boulder problem on a score sheet. The team of setters with the highest number of votes wins a special prize, provided by sponsors, as the "best route setting team". Their boulder problems then stay on the wall until the next setting, with their names written on them. In addition, the male and female winners of the climbing competition receive a prize.

THE PATH TO BECOMING MORE TANGIBLE

So far, we have taken Listen To The Rock to three major cities – Shenzhen, Beijing and Shanghai – and some of China's best-known and most-influential gyms. The event format is free of charge for the gyms – we as organizers consider our contribution as our gift and duty to the climbing community. Nowadays, it's easy for climbers in China to follow international climbing news, where they can discover competitions, athletes and climbing gyms worldwide. They can travel to other countries and get in touch with locals and climbers from all over the world. As a result, the benchmarks for climbing experiences and for the quality of route setting in gyms are rising. However, gyms often tend to think that it is beyond their capabilities to ensure high-quality route setting, or they are eager to try it but don't know how to do it properly.

Listen To The Rock intends to deliver the message that "route setting should be fun and enjoyable for everyone to try". By involving climbers in the setting process and providing them with the necessary know-how in a workshop, we want to raise awareness within the community and attempt to solve the lack of route setting experience in China. We believe that each and every climber has the potential and creativity to set his or her own route. Through our events and with the help of the gyms involved, climbers were given this opportunity. It was the first time that many of the participants, including climbers with years of experience, had held an impact driver and started route setting from zero.

After our first competition in Shenzhen, Listen To The Rock was reported via one of China's most famous climbing social media platforms. This boosted people's understanding of the role of route setters – that it is not only about drilling their own ideas into the wall,

but keeping in mind a wealth of factors, such as safety, ergonomics, positive experience, target customers, and so on. After participating in Listen To The Rock, we are hopeful that climbers will look at routes from a different angle in their next climbing session.

We are delighted with the results we have achieved so far, and are planning to extend our competition series. Our next event tour is scheduled in fall 2019 and will bring with it a fresh event format, involving even more climbing gyms and cities.

LISTEN TO THE ROCK:

Started in: Shenzhen / Beijing / Shanghai, China in June / July 2019

Number of events so far: 4

Number of participants: more than 250 people in total



ALESSANDRO USUELLI

Born: Italy, 1985

Lives in: Shanghai, China

Background: climbing wall designer and architect, founder of MOKA Climb



ANG ZHANG

Born: China, 1993

Lives in: Shanghai, China

Background: communications manager of MOKA Climb



MORE RESEARCH, MORE DATA, AND BETTER ROUTES

CWA 2018 INDOOR CLIMBING INDUSTRY REPORT

TEXT: GARNET MOORE, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, CLIMBING WALL ASSOCIATION

Photo: CWA

On the other hand, the total number of routes in your facility does seem to play a role in membership, possibly tying facility size and capacity to your ability to attract and retain loyal members.

Another interesting bit of data is that the average rock gym visit is 2.3 hours. With industry-wide benchmarking data you can understand the performance of your gym and the way that your route setting routines affect your members compared to what happens at a wide variety of facilities. Even knowing something as simple as the average number of member visits per month (5.46) can help determine what your resetting schedule should be.

About the Climbing Wall Association (CWA) and the Indoor Climbing Industry Report

The CWA was founded in 2003 and is the largest association of climbing gyms in the world. Our work on construction standards and industry practices began from day one by soliciting information and volunteers from leading climbing gym businesses. This research continued for years until the first construction standards were published in 2009. Now, at the request of our members, we have grown our Industry Research Program, including annual benchmarking reports.

The gyms that participate in the CWA's research initiatives are entitled to copies of the report in order to help them see how the information they provided fits in with larger industry-wide trends. For other gyms, the entire publication is available for review directly from the CWA.

While much of the data is focused on business intelligence, there are a lot of interesting ways that this data impacts how you can have a successful route setting program (and maybe help convince your manager or owner to allocate more money for holds and staff). In the first two years of the Industry Research Program, the CWA has been focusing its data collection in the US and Canada. In future studies the reach will begin to extend internationally, collecting data from volunteers around the world.

Average gym visit duration

2.3 hours

Average number of member visits per month

5.46



Photo: CWA

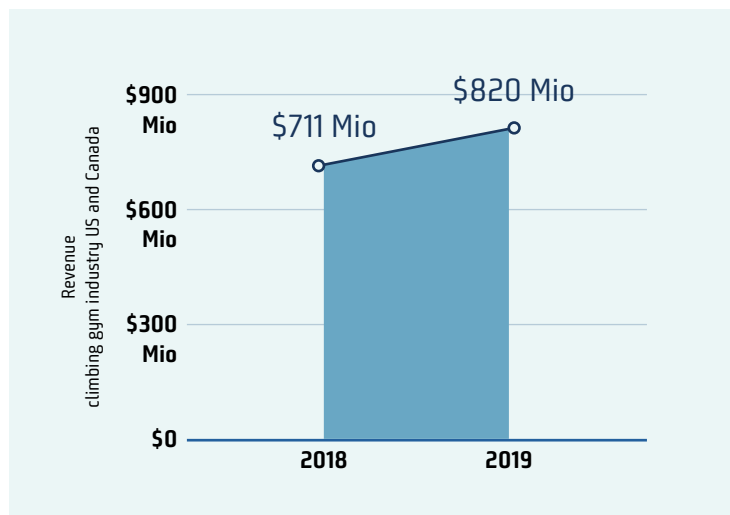
"Climbing is booming!" That's what you hear from everyone who knows anything about climbing gyms. And it's true – according to the 2018 Indoor Climbing Industry Report, the US and Canadian climbing gym industry brought in \$711 million in revenue in 2018. And in 2019 we should see that number increase beyond \$820 million.

But, how do we know this? There are no government agencies or tax returns to turn to, and Google won't help either. Gym owners have to be willing to share their information in order to understand where the industry is at. Luckily the Climbing Wall Association (CWA) is there to provide a safe space to collect and analyze all that data.

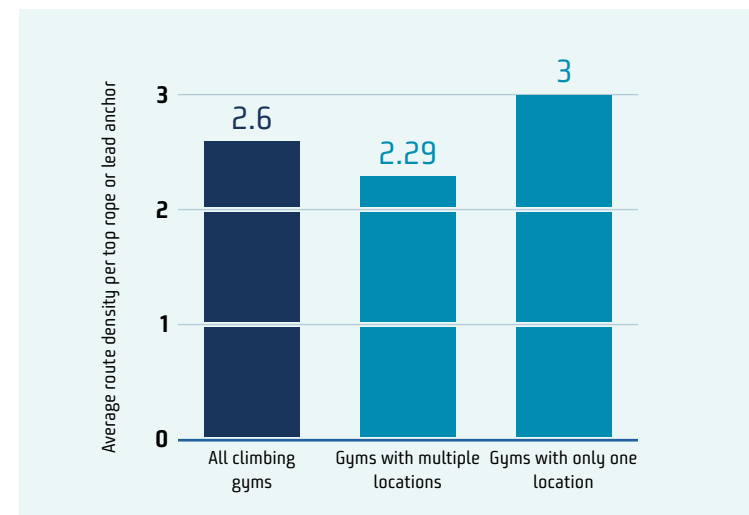
Have you ever wondered what the average route density at most gyms is? Have you ever wanted to know if that route density affects whether your customers keep climbing at your gym? The average route density sits at 2.6 routes per anchor at gyms in the US and Canada.

As a route setter you already know how that density affects your workload and hold orders, but you might be surprised to learn that route density does not appear to affect member retention – an indicator that packing a lot of routes onto your walls may not have a positive impact on customer experience and satisfaction.

PROJECTED CLIMBING GYM INDUSTRY REVENUE (US, CAN)



ROUTE DENSITY

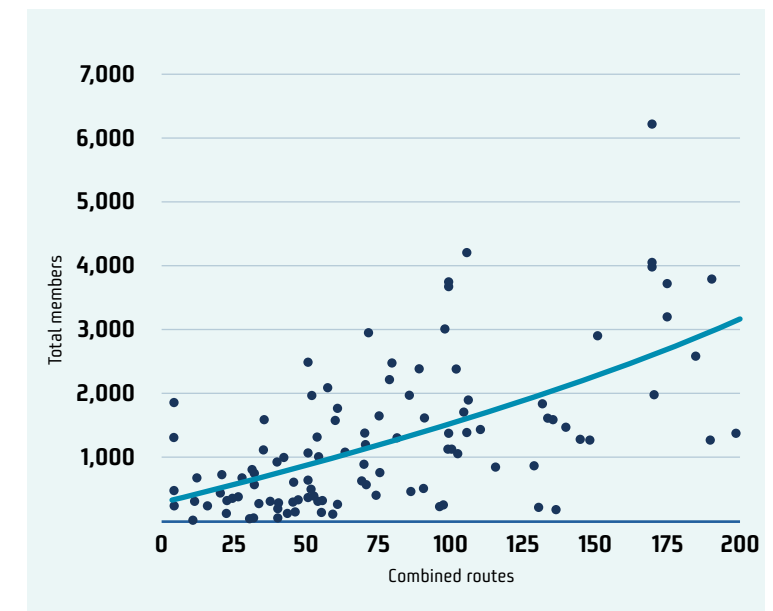


CLIMBING CAPACITY

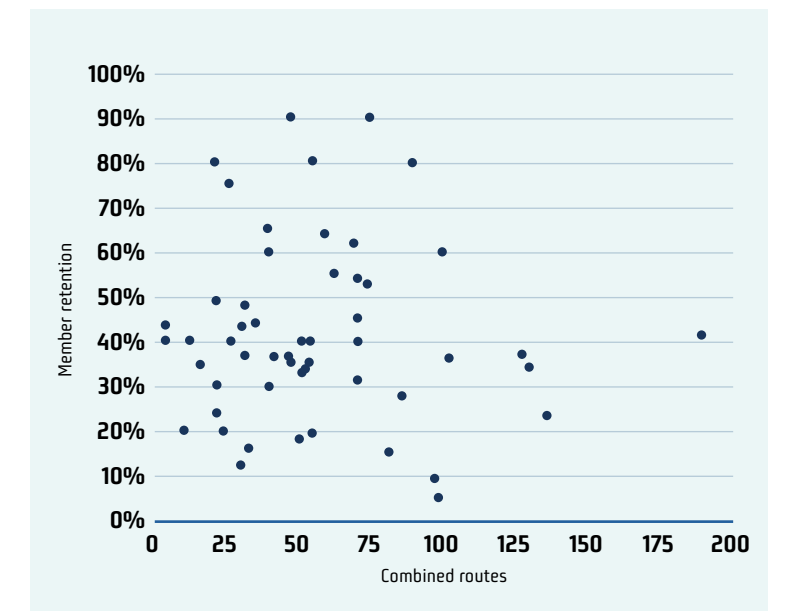
Number of boulder problems and rope routes which can be climbed simultaneously

The total number of routes at a facility may aid member growth. Factors other than route density likely influence member retention.

COMBINED ROUTES/PROBLEMS BY MEMBERSHIP



COMBINED ROUTES/PROBLEMS BY RETENTION PERCENTAGE



WHAT IS (AND WHO ARE) VERTICAL-LIFE?

MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHY SHOULD ANY OF US CARE?

TEXT: LIAM LONSDALE

◆ *Climbing, pretty much since the day it began, has been a self-regulated sport in that the people at the centre of it largely governed it, steered it. As we all know, climbing has seen massive growth over the past few decades, and over the last ten years more still, as some of the biggest global brands take interest. Now more than ever, with climbing entering the most mainstream sporting competition of all, climbing is potentially at risk of losing its way.*

As the sport continues to grow, both in numbers of participants and the revenue it drives, we must rely on the core members of the community to be stewards, to protect our best interests, and to lead the way. More than ever, along with the federations and governing bodies, it will be the businesses at the centre of climbing that seek to profit from the sport, and that are responsible for ensuring we follow a sustainable and responsible future.

Why should we care about Vertical-Life? Quite frankly, I believe that Vertical-Life is one of the few companies that will not only act as stewards for our sport, but will also have the vision and the capability to actually take us forward in a way that few others can. I met with CEO and Co-Founder Matthias Polig to find out why.

Matthias Polig draws his inspiration from the climbing pioneers that paved the way before him. Polig is a climber, first and foremost. From the very beginning, he set out to create an organisation that was influential, a business that makes climbing more accessible to the masses. The goal was to introduce people properly into climbing in a way that is sustainable for the sport, all the while staying true to the core of climbing, to the values that the pioneers before him represented and were keen to preserve.

An entrepreneur at 16 years old, Matthias Polig had his first company just two years later, aged eighteen. Towards the end of 2012, Matthias, a local developer himself, had recently written the climbing guide for Südtirol/South Tyrol and had the idea to digitalise the information it contained. In doing so, Polig knew he would be making it easier for people to access climbing areas ... and then it occurred to him, why stop at the Südtirol guide? Why not digitalise ALL climbing guides? And collect it together in one database that could be accessed anywhere, by anyone? Thus Vertical-Life was born. From the outset, Matthias had strong ideals around the ethos of the company:

“Ethics are something that are incredibly important to me. As a local developer, I was



MATTHIAS POLIG

Born: 1983

Lives in: Ratschings, Südtirol, Italy

Background: studied sports and economy, route setter, route developer, guidebook author, CEO of Vertical-Life

mentored by veterans like Hanspeter Eisendle and other pioneers. I learned the importance of community, and I was taught the necessity of resources and support. I came to know how valuable accurate information is. When I had the idea, I decided immediately that our digital guidebooks would collaborate with real locals in every destination, and that the guidebooks would become a resource that connected with the community, ensuring that sharing them benefited the local area and supported the developers. In fact, this made our progress a lot slower and a lot harder, but I knew it was the way to go.”

Undoubtedly, it did make things harder for the Vertical-Life team, and of course, any climbers out there will know of databases like Mountain Project, Super Topo, UKClimbing, 27Craggs, to name a few, and the list continues to grow ... a digital database wasn't new, even back then, but Matthias and his team wanted to do it differently. Where all the other databases relied on User Generated Content (UGC), Matthias wanted to get the information directly from the climbing developers themselves:

“In the end, guides built from UGC aren't what climbing needs, not when it comes to sustainable growth and responsible actions. Anybody can visit a cliff on their vacation and snap a photo of it. They might post it to a database and even include some route information, too. Does that climber care about the local parking situation, or land access rights? Maybe, but certainly not in a way that a local does. The local developers and bolters offer a depth of information and knowledge that seldom few others can; they know the ethics, the history, all of it, and so we stuck to that idea. Connecting with climbers on a local basis is the foundation of our platform.”

And so that's what they did. Matthias Polig, along with co-founders Maria Hilber and Arno Dejaco, took their ideas to the next level with a concept in hand that was working.

“I had the good fortune to meet Maria and Arno, and both of them were crazy enough to join forces with me and talented enough to pull it off. And we worked like hell. Looking back now, it's hard to imagine how much time and energy we put into it and were able to come out the other side, because really, we had to do everything. Everything. And then the guidebook business was progressing pretty well. We teamed up with Panico, one of the most important climbing publishers in Germany, and had the idea to include stickers inside the books that unlocked digital guides, and this proved incredibly successful. The business continued to grow steadily.

In spite of this, come winter time, we basically had no business at all. That's when I came up with the idea of the Zlagboard. This was a huge success. It took off so quickly, gathering international momentum and recognition. We didn't just have a training tool, we had a contest with global rankings and even world championships. It won innovation awards, it won ISPO awards, and that was what really

put us - our business - on the map. People may not have realised that it was Vertical-Life that was behind it, but climbers had almost certainly heard of the Zlagboard. Whilst all this success was building, we realised that Vertical-Life was becoming a little neglected, almost like a second product to the Zlagboard, and in that moment, we decided that we needed to go back to our roots, refocus on the platform, realise its potential and invest more time and money to develop it.”

“LOCAL CLIMBERS SHOULD BE IN CHARGE OF THEIR AREAS. THEY ARE THE STEWARDS WITH A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND DUTY FOR A RESPONSIBLE USE OF THE RESOURCES AND INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY.”

And that is exactly what they did. For four years, they had bootstrapped the business. A true tech startup, hustling their way through the trials and tribulations of growing a business. It was an external investment from the Leitner Group, a company based a few miles away from their Brixen HQ, known for their success in the field of ski lifts and ropeways that really kicked off the next phase of growth.

“That was when we were able to really expand our platform and implement some of the ideas that we had been so keen to develop. With that investment, we were able to develop our route setting software, we were able to truly connect indoor climbing with outdoor climbing, and with that same investment, we were able to buy 8a.nu ...”

Yes, you read that correctly. Vertical-Life bought 8a.nu. I remember the deal coming to fruition; it wasn't long after the first time that Matthias and I worked together, and I am still blown away now that they pulled that off. The acquisition of 8a.nu in itself was huge. Aside from all of its faults, it is widely regarded as the original climbing database and one of the most frequently updated and legitimate news sources on cutting-edge climbing to this day. Not to mention one of the biggest databases in the world of routes and ascents. As this goes to print, there are over one million individual users on the site, and over 90% of that traffic comes from people that actually type “8a.nu” into the domain field ... no search engines. Anyone who knows anything about the internet knows that those figures are astounding:

“I knew how powerful a tool 8a.nu was, and when the right time had come, I reached out to Jens [Larssen, the former owner and now chief-editor of 8a.nu]. I flew to Sweden with our Chief Technical Officer, Iiro Virtanen, and we spent three days bolting and climbing together. You can say what you want about Jens and his writing style – I will admit it is unique to say the least – but whatever you think of it, you cannot deny he is a pioneer. Jens and I met and I was able to convince him to do the deal in order to enable us to develop the platform further and bring it to its full potential. In the time afterwards, we became good friends. The vision is to bring Vertical-Life and 8a.nu together. We are still working on a redesign of the website, but it's important that we honour Jens' original vision, too. We want to create the best

possible climbing guide experience, and we will do that with data. If you look at 8a.nu, it is truly a history of our sport. If you look at the old ascents from some of the pioneers of the last generation that used to use it ... it's amazing. With 5.4 million ascents in the database, and 1.1 million routes listed, it's comprehensive, to say the least. Combining the two resources, the technology of Vertical-Life, and the database of 8a.nu, there's nothing like it.”

And so, with manoeuvres in the industry like this, the logical question to ask is always, “what is next?”, which is precisely what I asked Matthias:

“The vision and the goal for Vertical-Life is to continue to connect climbing. I believe that climbing in the future should truly belong to climbers, as it has in the past. What does that mean? Local climbers should be in charge of their areas. They are the stewards with a sense of ownership and duty for a responsible use of the resources and involvement of the community. How do we at Vertical-Life approach this matter? We want to contribute by solving problems for those climbers.

We solve the challenge of digitalisation for authors and route developers by involving them and creating a platform instead of out-competing them with user generated content. Our route setting management software solves a problem: it makes work and organization easier for managers and setters, while at the same time offering them further customer connectivity and insight. Many climbing gyms have a speed route, but most of the time it's not in use. Our Ninja Timer is

"OUR PLATFORM OFFERS THE CHANCE TO SEAMLESSLY CONNECT INDOOR AND OUTDOOR CLIMBING, GYM MANAGERS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS, FEDERATIONS AND ATHLETES."

a very easy-to-use, cable-less and interactive speed timing system which turns the speed wall into an attraction for all gym customers. The Smart Quickdraw is a product that enables vertical use stream analysis. And we continue to work on the integration of our software with POS and entrance systems. The new 'passport' that we are developing allows climbers to check in quickly via smartphone, similar to how one would check in at an airport. We will launch this 'climbing passport' in conjunction with the ABC in the United Kingdom soon. Together with the IFSC, we are working on a similarly large project – the new official results system for competitions. The concept is based on our Smart Scorecard, a software solution for any kind of climbing competition, which replaces the classic method of using paper slips for scoring. Our platform offers the chance to seamlessly connect indoor and outdoor climbing, gym managers and their customers, federations and athletes. I think we are making good progress trying to achieve that."

And truly, when you hear Matthias speak about his vision and his passion, it is impres-

sive and inspiring. But where did it come from?

"It's only now that I really understand that everything I did as I was growing up is playing an important part in my work now. I realise how it is coming together on a daily basis. I grew up in the mountains, working on a mountain farm with my father, and that gave me a strong work ethic ... in fact, it gave me a working knowledge of tools and materials. The knowledge I picked up on that farm enabled me to build the Zlagboard with wood and steel. I went on to study economics and sports in Innsbruck, where I connected to the Innsbruck climbing scene. I worked as an event manager and organised successful climbing events. I am a national route setter and am involved in the competition scene. I run a small climbing gym and understand what it means to make that kind of business successful. I really took part, and continue to take part in, all of the different aspects that Vertical-Life works in now.

I still work day and night. Ask my wife and child, I work too much. It used to be some-

thing like 5am until 11pm. Now it's more like 7:30am until 6pm, and then emails. I'm trying to get better... it's a kind of sickness, but honestly, it fuels me. Thankfully, we have an incredibly strong team behind us now. Vertical-Life is now 26 employees from 12 different countries, working full time here in Brixen. The best part is, they joined Vertical-Life because they are climbers themselves and believe in the concept. I believe that climbing preselects people in some ways. We climbers tend to be ambitious. We tend to be hard on ourselves. That really shows in our team. They're talented and hard-working. They enable me to keep my focus on creating new ideas. Even though we all have our noses to the grindstone, we still take time to climb together twice a week during office hours."

And so with that there is only one thing left to ask Matthias. I was curious to know when he ever has time to climb for himself?

"I had a goal a couple of years ago to climb my 'lifetime project', which was a route I discovered and bolted. I managed to get the first ascent at Stohlwond in Südtirol/South Tyrol. Now I still like to bolt and I like to do first ascents. It is actually the FAs that keep me motivated to climb and stay strong. I truly love all types of climbing. Well, if I am honest, not so much ice climbing, but I've done it. I love Psicobloc. In the future? I guess I see myself doing more first ascents!"



Matthias Polig climbing at his home crag Stohlwond, Südtirol, Italy

Photo: Manuel Senettin

BENKY CLIMBING

WE BUILD ROCKSTARS



Benky Climbing realised the design & production for the new competition wall of Adidas Rockstars 2019

WE SUPPLY EVERYTHING TO RUN A PROFESSIONAL BOULDER- AND CLIMBING GYM.



Boulderwall design, development and construction.
Bouldering mats. Carpet & PVC in highest EN standards.
Climbing holds and volumes of major brands.

benkyclimbing.com



Unique Shapes

ARTLINE

#UNIQUE SHAPES

ArtLine's story is closely bound to that of the French shaper Brice Anziutti. In 2011, he created ArtLine with the pioneering idea of breaking with the traditional codes dictated by outdoor climbing. Instead of holds imitating rock, their design should spark a desire to climb. ArtLine gradually established itself as a key brand and inspired a tran-

sition in the sport, with a split between indoor and outdoor climbing. Many new brands have since come on to the market, but ArtLine has stuck faithfully to its baseline: Unique Shapes. It is this approach that has ensured the brand remains original, with creative, innovative products.



www.artline-holds.com



THE TWINS

Complementary holds that fit together, side by side, in parallel or offset.

size: XXL

grip type: slopy edge

material: Polyurethane (PU)



THE MERCY

One face, five backs ! They look similar from below, but appearances can be deceptive...

size: XXXL

grip type: sloper / edge

material: Fiberglass



WOODLINE DUAL

To slip or not to slip... A whole range of volumes with both smooth and textured surfaces.

size: volumes from S to XL

material: 18 mm birch plywood



THE BLADE

Sharp as a knife! Long, thin pinch that require wide hands and a lot of strength.

size: XXXL

grip type: pinch

material: Fiberglass



THE LOBE

Walls have ears... These rounded, flat macros are all about sensitivity and delicate balance.

size: XXXL

grip type: dual handed

material: Fiberglass



BAROCKA PLYWOOD VOLUMES

BaRocka is Polish company formed by two friends, sharing the same passion for climbing, engineering and woodworking. Through their abilities and experience their hobby quickly become professional manufacturing of climbing walls and plywood volumes. BaRocka provide a wide range of volumes which are for now 65 models.

Volumes are made of 18mm water-resistant birch plywood. T-nuts are zinc-plated steel for M10 bolts. The friction is achieved by PU paint and quartz sand. The final painting is UV stable, hard and durable, easy to clean. Screw placements are reinforced by special metal sleeves.

XXL VOLUMES

Huge volumes that easily change shape of any wall. You can find here very flat volumes, and also very convex ones. But still small enough to send it on a pallet.

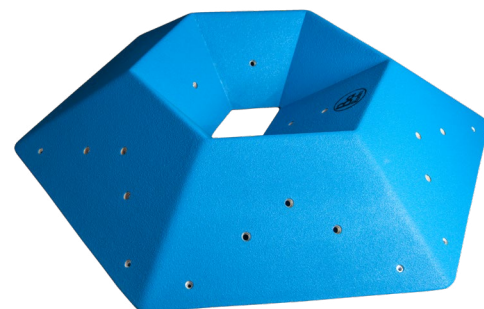
V29-V32

Most flat pyramids ever - for little change of slabs and vertical walls.



V33-V38

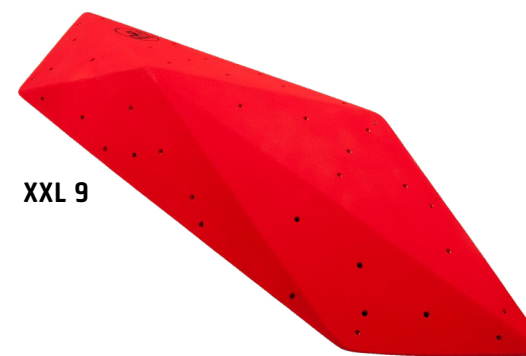
Six volumes in shape of crescents - for use in every formation.



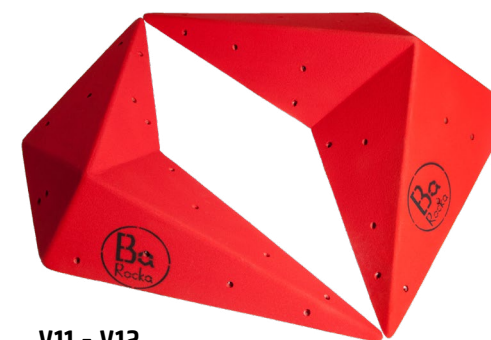
V39-V42

Four volumes with concave shape - ones of first in the world - gives new possibilities for routesetters.

Awesome shapes for every formation - gives possibility to create 3D climbing boulder problems and routes. Many volumes can be grouped, what allow to set attractive and good looking boulder problems.



XXL 9



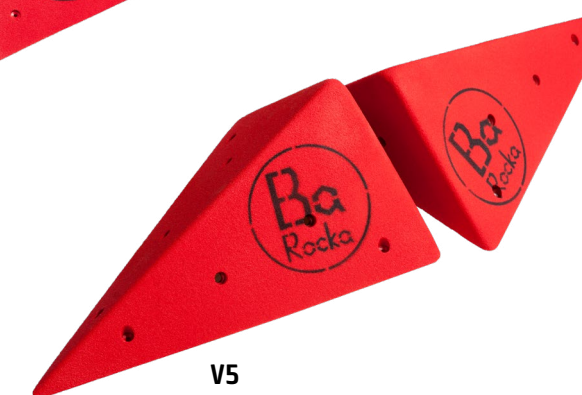
V11 - V12



XXL 5



V8



V5

www.barocka.com



Photo: René Oberkirch

BLUEPILL – CLIMBING HOLDS & VOLUMES

BLUEPILL - THIS NAME SAYS IT ALL!

It is not so much if our pill brings you into the matrix - it for sure brings you into new dimensions - it releases the power of creation.

bluepill gives you, the route setters and gym managers a tool for your many ideas and different „problems“ and makes it possible based on the versatility of their implementation.

We are presenting, a gigantic competition line with many creative fiberglass shapes, commercial holds for everyday use as well as a large selection of wood volumes to changing the conditions of the wall completely. bluepill stands for its diversity. Whether polyurethane or polyester, wood volume or fiberglass volume, we are looking forward to support you worldwide in the implementation of your ideas and goals.



FIBERGLASS VOLUMES

The fiber impressions are an extension of the PU line and offer an extremely high variability of easy and hard movement sequences. You can NOT only choose your own color, but also the dual texture option and color combination is completely selectable for all volumes. No matter if World Cup or beginner's parcour, our customers are already using these volumes in every possible setting. Only your imagination is the limit, to our variations.



DOWNCLIMB JUG - one hold, many possibilities!

Whether as downclimb jug, as target grip of a route, as marked beginners hold (with left or right marked to climb in order to learn the right grip sequence), or as advertising space used by your partners, there are many ideas for this grip.

ORIGINALS

Our originals are truly original. Inspired by a lot of route setting, real rock formations and inspirations borrowed from organic design principles, our originals are created. Small to large, they are our new innovative series, representing a great new line in our sortiment



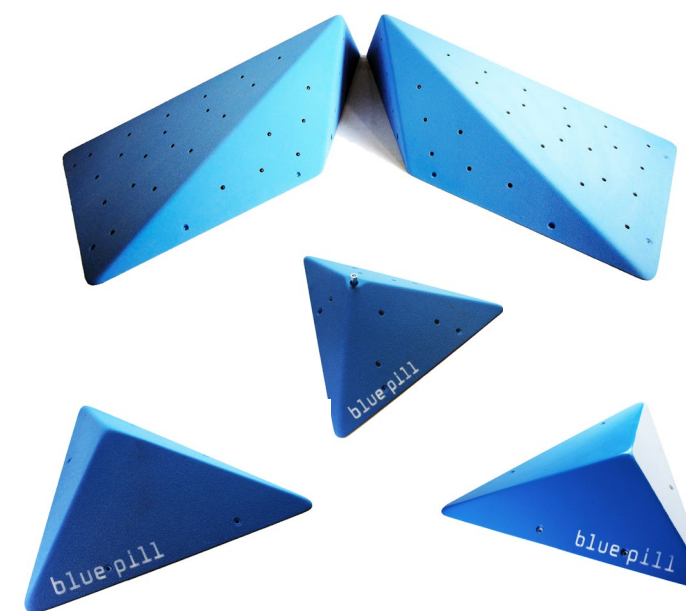
PU HOLDS - COMPETITION LINE

The competition line is a technically demanding range with a focus on competition. Mandatory movements for fun cups or world cups are easy to set with our shapes. Once tried, competitions could no longer be imagined without this classic line.



WOOD MADE VOLUMES

bluepill wood volumes are designed for you to create complex motion sequences. the selectable dual texture option allows you to define moves surgically. Bolt-on option, base plate option, with and without T-nuts are further processing possibilities. All wood volumes can be combined in any way due to their uniform dimensions of 300, 600 and 1200mm.



PE HOLDS - SPLIT GRIP LINE

Split grip is also part of the program, that is also as well visible as smart. This is a special feature of rather juggy holds and well combinable grips. All these grips are vastly popular in bouldering and climbing gyms, in easy as in difficult routes. Needless to say, they have a wide range of use.





ENTRE PRISES X SHAUNA COXSEY

In 1985, ENTRE-PRISES (EP) created the first artificial climbing holds and revolutionised the future of the sport. The development of individual and moveable holds presented new creative possibilities, ultimately providing routesetters with the tools and freedom to invent boulder problems and routes that could continually challenge climber's physical and mental abilities.

A year later and EP re-invented the wheel once again, building the first artificial climbing wall; adding another new dimension to the sport's evolution. 30 years on and with over 6000 climbing walls built around the world, ENTRE-PRISES continues to lead the way in new innovations and standards of quality.

ENTRE-PRISES is the world leader in climbing walls and is proud to be a long-term partner to the official Climbing Wall Supplier for the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC). EP has helped to develop and support the promotion of Sport Climbing since the early days of the IFSC's 2007 debut and has been a major IFSC partner since 2011.

At its core is ENTRE-PRISES's guiding principle is that; climbing should be accessible to everyone.

EP is recognised for its outstanding quality as an:

- » IFSC Official Speed Wall Manufacturer
- » IFSC Official Sport Equipment supplier for Holds, Volumes and Macros categories

Moreover, ENTRE-PRISES was chosen to be the sole supplier for the first-ever Olympic climbing wall in TOKYO. After providing the climbing wall for the Youth Olympic Games Buenos Aires 2018, it is another great step forward for ENTRE-PRISES, the longest lasting IFSC partner.

This year, Shauna Coxsey worked with ENTRE-PRISES to shape its very first line of Holds dedicated to everyone.

"When setting out to create my first ever range of holds I had one central idea in mind; to make a range that could be used to set fun and creative problems for climbers of all abilities. Everything has been designed with the climber in mind. All the edges are rounded and comfortable so they feel good in your hands and the texture of each hold feels nice on your skin. The simple geometric shapes lend themselves to all styles of climbing from fundamental climbing movements right up to elite level climbs of all styles. I really wanted the holds to work on lots of different styles. Also some of the holds across the range interconnect to generate endless possibilities of hold configurations. I am so excited to see what routesetters do with these holds and hopefully climbers will get as much fun climbing on these holds as I had creating them!"

Number of holds: 18
Material: Polyurethane
Size: M/ L/ XL/ XXL
Colours: Blue, Red, Yellow, Fluo Pink, Fluo Orange, Black, Fluo Green, Purple



RAILS L - Set of x2
 These two rails can match to create a stopper, or can be used separately. Very effective to force a direction in a section. To screw with woodscrews only.



RAILS XL - Set of x2
 One of these rails is incut and the other sloppier, making for a pair of nice edges. Very effective to force a direction in a section. To set with wood screws only.



RAILS XXL - Set of x3
 This set of three XXL rails is excellent to open sections that will challenge a climber mind. The grips are soft and comfortable, and you can set them with bolts or screws.



EDGES M - Set of x3
 Three edges from Shauna's range, the basic toolkit for any route-setter in order to quickly adjust a route difficulty. Set up with screws only.



EDGES L - Set of x2
 Two large edges with soft and ergonomic grips, which can be used with other holds from Shauna's range for aesthetic sections that can be quickly adjusted for any level. Set with wood screws only.



JUGS XXL - Set of x2
 Two jug holds with soft and ergonomics grips, to use with other holds from Shauna's range for aesthetic sections that can be quickly adjusted for any level. Set bolts or screws.



PINCHES XL - Set of x2
 Two must-have XL pinches from Shauna's range for any routesetter. Set with bolts or screws.



SLOPERS XL - Set of x2
 Two XL slopers, one of them sloppy, with soft and ergonomic grips that can be used with other holds from Shauna's range. Can be quickly adjusted for any level. Set with wood screws only.

NATURE CLIMBING



SANDSTONE WOODIES - LYN

This is the newest evolution in natural shaping. Made from carefully selected strong natural Italian sandstone and European FSC certified solid oak. Keep crushing while keeping your skin tip-top, with nothing but raw nature under your fingertips.

LAUNCHING THIS WINTER IN BOTH RAW AND SHIELDED – STAY TUNED.

SLATE WOODIES - LYN

The carefully selected UK slate is strong as granite but somewhere in between granite and sandstone in friction and texture. This is perhaps the most stunning natural climbing hold we have ever created. Keep crushing while keeping your skin tip-top, with nothing but raw nature under your fingertips.

LAUNCHING THIS WINTER IN BOTH RAW AND SHIELDED – STAY TUNED.

NATURE CLIMBING

Innovative solutions, a timeless Scandinavian design and honest, durable products made of raw and sustainable materials – that is Nature Climbing. The dedicated Danish climbing brand is about pushing the limits and inspiring the climbing community with a different approach

to shaping and climbing equipment. Sustainability is a must in the production process, as well as environmental and social responsibility, when the founders Mads and Christian work on their original ideas in the workshop in Aarhus, Denmark.



GRANITE WOODIES - LYN RAW

Made from carefully selected natural Scandinavian granite and European FSC certified solid oak. The surface and friction of the wood is kept raw and untreated, resulting in the most interesting natural friction. Ranging from intriguing training shapes (15 cm x 2,0 cm x 8 cm) to beautiful large futuristic shapes (50 cm x 2,5 cm x 16 cm).



GRANITE WOODIES - LYN SHIELDED

Made from carefully selected natural Scandinavian granite and European FSC certified solid oak. The wood is gently treated with Eco Epoxy to water seal it - ideal for commercial setting where durability and easy maintenance are top priority. Slick dual texture makes the holds a perfect choice for routesetters. Ranging from intriguing training shapes (15 cm x 2,0 cm x 8 cm) to large futuristic shapes (50 cm x 2,5 cm x 16 cm).



STICK IT

Probably the most uncompromising, advanced, aesthetic and durable brushing stick ever created for climbing. Made from premium anodized aluminum and high quality carbon imbued inlays. Designed and produced in Aarhus, Denmark on high-precision machinery. It takes brushing to an entirely new level.



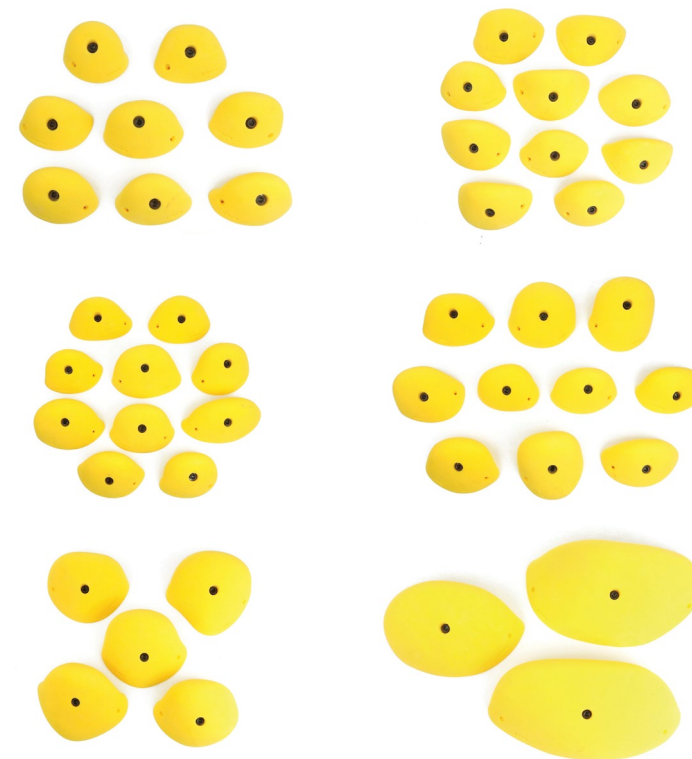
HANDMADE CLIMBING BRUSHES

These need no further introduction. Made from European FSC certified solid white maple wood and hand-selected 70 mm long boar's bristles of the highest quality. All brushes are hand-bristled by looping separate bundles through the backside of the brush and attaching them very close together. Made in close cooperation with blind craftsmen through the non-profit organization "Blindes Arbejde" in Denmark.



BUCKETS

With over 80 super positive handholds and 40 feet, the Buckets series ensures you will never be short on jugs again! Ergonomically designed, these classic shapes are among Rock Candy's most beloved holds of all time.



GIVING SHAPE TO YOUR PASSION

Rock Candy Holds was born out of a love of climbing and a passion to help shape the community and culture that surrounds it. Over the past 12 years, Rock Candy has worked side-by-side with climbers, route setters and gym owners to provide high-quality climbing holds and useful tools.

All Rock Candy Holds are poured in the United States with the highest quality polyurethane and are shipped in 10 days or less, the fastest turn-around time in the industry.

Find new inspiration and our full product line at rockcandyholds.com.

Their holds can be found around the globe on home walls, in climbing gyms, and featured in top climbing competitions such as the IFSC circuit and USA Climbing Nationals. Rock Candy Holds can be purchased directly online or through local distributors across Europe and Asia.



DENTS

Find the sweet spot. Pockets, slopers, pinches, and jugs all with focused, stylistic consistency.



BLOCKUS

Featuring Blockus Colossals, this series of pinches has quickly become a favorite around the world for their simplicity and variety.





VIRGINGRIP - SHOWING DIRECTION

Our brand tells you a lot about us. We'd love the climbers to experience our climbing holds for their exceptional, unique features. Just like the first time - you will never forget the fine touch of our climbing holds - perfect and pure. Simply virgin!

FROM AN IDEA, CHOICE & CREATIVITY TO ROUTE SETTING AND ALL OVER AGAIN.

ALLHOLDS - CLIMBING VARIETY

We proudly introduce "allHOLDS" - network of independent climbing hold producers. Our target is to offer a wide variety of individual holds made possible by the creativity of its members, using the high-quality material developed by ebalta Kunststoff GmbH, a German leading manufacturer of polyurethane resins.

We are inviting independent climbing hold producers to grow up with allHOLDS! Your strong competitive advantages are to become more successful while using an experienced product development and the benefits of a common commercial approach with www.allholds.com.

We want you! Accept our invitation, check it out and become part of the network!



www.virgingrip.com

DUALGRIP SYSTEM BY VIRGINGRIP

Our DUALGRIP system with its endless options for the route setters as well as for you! 2 in 1. These climbing holds differ with each individual setting. No need to stick to traditional shapes of climbing holds! Be different with us!

THE SKULL & BRAIN - OVERCOME YOUR FEAR

You don't need to be a surgeon to love this climbing hold. Shocking for the first sight, loved for the second! This climbing hold won't leave you calm. Catch up your brains!



THE EGGS - DUALGRIP SYSTEM IN PLACE

Our vision of you, your friends and your kids - having fun with our climbing holds, including both our essential surfaces. Once together, they are able to change by each turn of the inner yolk.



THE CATERPILLAR SET - UNLIMITED ROUTE SETTING

Seven large positive climbing holds can be gradually set into one large volume or used individually on your walls. Get an unlimited scale of possibilities!



All made in Tisá! Check it out on www.virgingrip.com or contact your local distributors:

Poland - redPoint climb&boulder shop, email: sklep@redpoint.pl / www.sklep.redpoint.pl
Belgium, Netherlands - BijzonderBuiten, email: igor.koot@bijzonderbuiten.nl / www.bijzonderbuiten.nl
Switzerland - Laniac.ch (Swiss Climbing Holds), email: lowie@laniac.ch / www.laniac.ch



KILTER GRIPS



Kilter Grips are shaped by Ian Powell and our Haptic Design Team of pro shapers, setters, and climbers including Jeremy Ho and Jimmy Webb. Urban Plastix are Peter Juhl's brand. Combined we offer over 5000 shapes.

The Kilter Board is a modern take on traditional training boards. Featuring comfortable holds that light up, a fully adjustable frame, and an app offering thousands of boulder problems and the ability to design your own, the Kilter Board is a great tool for all levels from first time climbers to strong climbers that need a constant challenge.

Kilter Grips has been voted #1 Favorite Hold Company five times in the setter-judged Climbing Business Journal Grip List. 2018 and 2019 All Time Favorite Brand. Selected for IFSC T20 Catalogue.

Setter Closet shapes are produced at Aragon and Composite-X in only the best polyurethanes. New Fiberglass line produced at Walltopia. Unique shapes at each manufacturer, hundreds of new shapes a year, all available worldwide.



NOAH

Simple and clean with organic curves. Smooth irregularities for varied grip positions. Classic Kaiju Huecos and Noah Ledges are must-haves. 649 holds by Ian Powell.



BRUSHED SANDSTONE & SANDSTONE

Classic and beautiful interpretations of geology. Rock inspired, artist designed for directional, technical, and fun setting. Brushed faces add a real-rock feel to the grabs. Bring the outdoors indoors. 821 holds by Ian Powell.



URBAN PLASTIX

Peter Juhl has expanded his classic UP series of Tremors, Speed Bumps, Not Fonts, Ditches, and more to encompass a wide variety of pleasing, fun shapes. Some of the most unique yet useful grips on the market. 1108 shapes by Peter Juhl. @urbanplastix



GRANITE

Our Granite series combines real rock feel with technical routesetting functionality. The Granite Complex especially allow micro-adjustments to the grip so you can get your perfect grade every time. 429 holds by Will Anglin and Ian Powell.

SOUTHERN SLOPERS

Far from average slopers. Jimmy Webb brings the same legendary focus to shaping that he applies to seeking out and sending the hardest lines in the world. He was born of Southern Sandstone and his slopers, pinches, biscuits, and crimps are a style all his own. Huge, but they rarely feel easy. 96 holds by Jimmy Webb.



STELLA & MOSES

Stella feature deceptively simple contours, Moses elegant sandstone plates. Our close friend Keith Dickey brought years of climbing and setting, thoughtfulness, and a singular perspective into his shapes. His Stella Granite Junction line allows you to seamlessly blend your smooth holds with your granite. 182 holds by Keith Dickey.

LO RIDERS

Sleek, low-profile, custom holds shaped by Jeremy Ho. His vision of modern setting, where the entire route is an aesthetic installation, influenced the style of these elegantly tapered directional grips. 42 holds by Jeremy Ho.

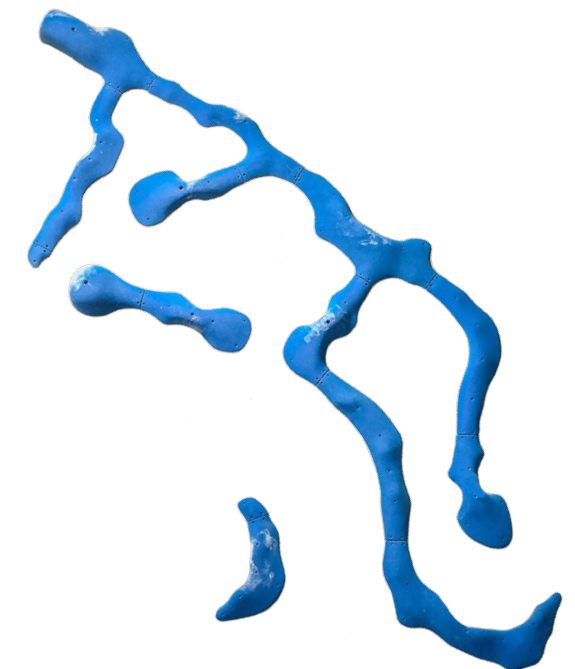


GEO COMPLEX

Industrial design meets climbing holds. Peter Juhl of Urban Plastix has brought clean, tight architectural lines to his first series for Kilter. These rounded geometric blocks work together perfectly to dial in your hold size and positivity, making it easy to tweak difficulty, even between rounds. Futuristic. 195 holds by Peter Juhl.

SMOOTH TUFAS

Revolutionary modular organic tufa system with ends that match up allow for specific, directional, and aesthetic showpiece routes and problems. This system can be set as big features or entire connected lines. Works well alone or with companion sets like Winter, Noah, Lo Riders, and Brushed Sandstone. Appropriate for everything from new climbers to comp finals. Engage your customers from the moment they walk in the door. 90 pieces and counting by Ian Powell.



SMART CLIMBING GYM

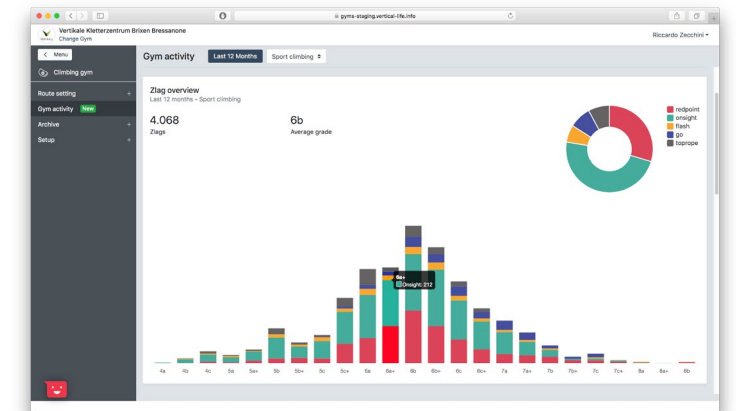


UNDERSTAND YOUR CLIMBERS AND OPTIMIZE YOUR ROUTE SETTING



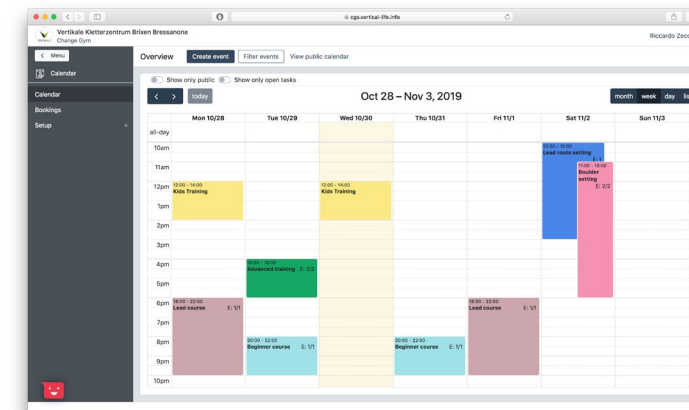
"Vertical-Life continuously improves their already solid product. One example of this is the new feature "Gym Activity". With this feature I get practical feedback for route setting in our gym which allows me to optimize planning and managing the routes and boulders problems we set."

Christoph Gabrysch
(Technical operations manager
DAV Alpinzentrum Kempten, Germany)



HASSLE FREE OPERATIONS THROUGH AUTOMATION

- » Provide notifications for new routes/boulders
- » Set expiration dates for routes & reminders for setters
- » Ready-to-print professional route card displays
- » Web widgets for your site and smart TVs



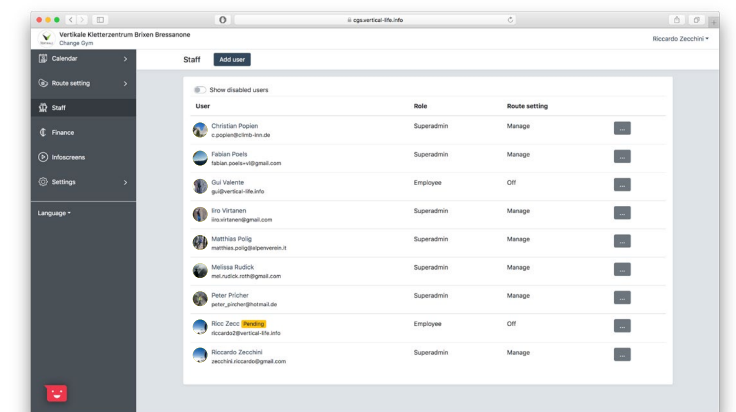
© Florian Murnig

"Vertical-Life allows me to have a good and complete overview of what there is and what would be needed for the clients of our gym from the route setting point of view. It gives us the tools to collect feedback and keep developing in the right direction".

Adam Pustelnik
(IFSC Chief Route Setter and Head Setter
Oslo Klatresenter, Norway)

ONE INTEGRATED AND CONNECTED SOLUTION FOR YOUR GYM

- » Route setting, course booking, staffing, and app, all in one package
- » Data-based management of processes
- » Industry leading data analysis and reporting
- » Scalability: one system for multiple locations and roles
- » Fast, cloud based solution suited for growing or high-volume gyms



"It was an easy choice for us to use Vertical-Life in our gym. It has so many useful features, both for the climber and the route-setter. Especially since our gym is so big, it's really nice to have a complete overview over all the routes and boulders."

Birgit Nesheim
(Head Route Setter,
Tromsø Klattreklubb, Norway)

SMART CLIMBING GYM
ROUTE SETTING AND GYM MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Nurture your gym's most valuable assets: Route setting, Courses, Staff, and of course, CLIMBERS. Vertical-Life's Smart Climbing Gym helps gyms all over the world plan, carry out, monitor and improve the lifeblood of their business. We are a digital platform (software & app) that provides your gym with state-of-the-art tools to manage route setting, staff and courses while offering the chance to directly connect to your climbers via the Vertical-Life app.

ROUTE SETTING

- » Manage routes
- » Organize route setters
- » View detailed analytics and reports

COURSE BOOKING

- » Course management and promotion
- » Online booking & payments
- » Staff scheduling

STAFF MANAGEMENT

- » Click & drag scheduling
- » Staff and task organizing
- » Financial reports

INFOSCREENS / SMART TV INTEGRATION

- » Highlight routes, courses and events
- » Promote your sponsors
- » Plug and play



Vertical-Life
climbing app



CONNECT TO YOUR CUSTOMERS THROUGH THE VERTICAL-LIFE APP

The Vertical-Life App is a digital climbing guide, social network and training log for outdoor and indoor climbers. Raise customer engagement and retention by connecting your gym to the app! The app offers state-of-the-art route information and a logging function for indoor climbing gyms and over 4.500 outdoor crags. It also provides a train-

ing feature for a fast growing number of participating climbing gyms. Monthly challenges, personal achievements and the training log add gamification and motivational elements to the users' daily climbing routines.

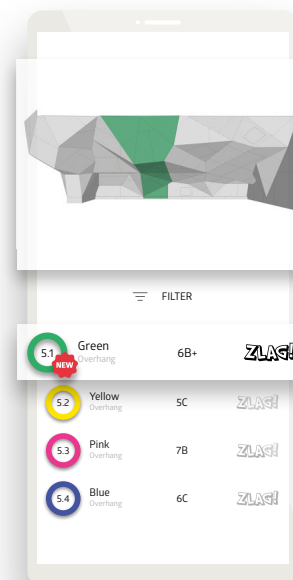


221 728
Vertical-Life USERS

1 824 327
ZLAG!

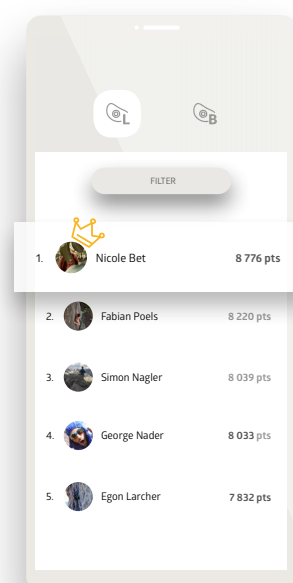
95
MORE THAN CLIMBING
DESTINATIONS

182 GYMS
WORLDWIDE



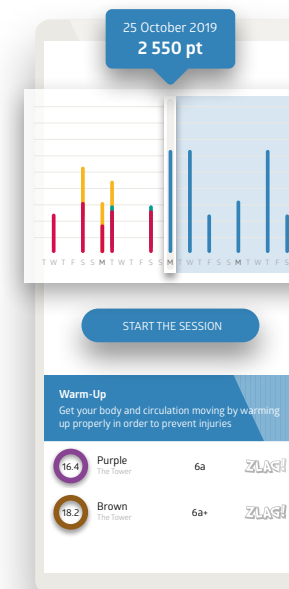
GYM TOPOS

- » Route overview
- » Search and filter
- » Tick routes
- » Comment on route setting



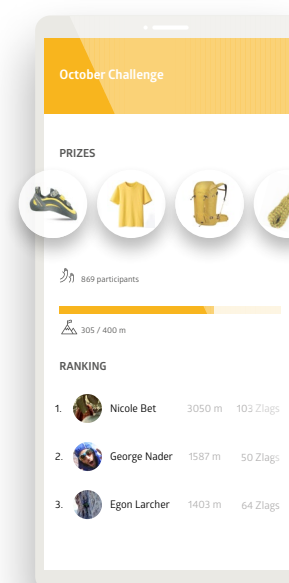
RANKING GAMES

- » Gym ranking
- » Worldwide ranking
- » Friendly competition



TRAINING

- » Statistics and analytics
- » Individualized training plans and workouts
- » Based on routes and boulders in the gym



CHALLENGES

- » Set monthly goals
- » Join ongoing events
- » Win prizes



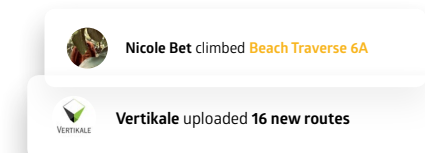
ACHIEVEMENTS

- » Collect badges
- » Unlock hidden rewards



NOTIFICATIONS

- » New routes
- » Friend updates
- » Challenge updates



"The new route and other notifications that Vertical-Life sends me are not only a great way to stay informed on what the route setters are doing at my gym, but they also keep me motivated as I get notified when my friends that I follow send and zlag their routes!"

Anna K.
(Everyday Vertical-Life app user)



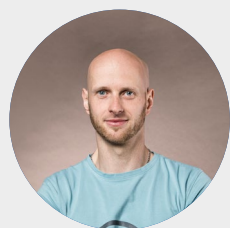
TECHNIQUE VIDEO LIBRARY

HELPING CLIMBERS BREAK DOWN TECHNIQUE AND SPEED UP THE LEARNING CURVE

The technique video library is a new free feature in the Vertical-Life app. For gyms, taking advantage of this feature requires little: route setters can simply tag the style of the climb (dyno, drop-knees, etc.) when adding a route to the Smart Climbing Gym database. The fitting technique video will then automatically appear to users in the app.

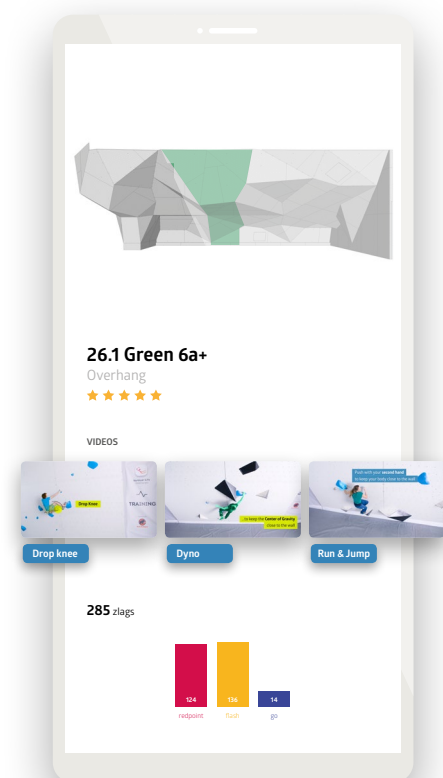
Available training plans and advice for climbing are often focused on strength and power. These new videos are designed to help climbers understand the nuances and subtleties of complex movement and technique.

The technique video library - containing over 30 videos - has been created with the help of pro-climbers under the supervision of coach Ingo Filzwieser.



"Climbing and bouldering fulfills me completely and I love to convey this sensation to others. It is an unbelievable feeling to see climbers improve and get stronger when you share your advice with them."

Ingo Filzwieser
(Elite coach and national team trainer)



ROUTE CARD HOLDERS

THE SIMPLE, LONG-LASTING AND EFFICIENT SYSTEM FOR MANAGING YOUR ROUTE CARDS

The holder for climbing route cards represents a new, sustainable solution for displaying route information in climbing gyms. Gym customers can view route information on a clean, legible display. The functional design enables flexible mounting, the fast exchange of route cards and a clean uniform system.

Route cards can be printed directly from Vertical-Life's route management tool. The appropriate dimensions are already stored in the software as a template. Several routes/boulders can be displayed on one card.

INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE

This cost-efficient, sustainable solution replaces hand-written, laminated sheets and stickers and is tailored to the specific needs of climbing gyms.

EASY MOUNTING

Mounting and handling is simple, fast and flexible. Lift-able edges allow for easy opening, and no hinges are needed thanks to the bendable material.

DESIGN AND MATERIAL

Form follows function. The focus lies on optimum visibility of the route information; the holder itself is almost invisible. The curved surface improves legibility when viewed from the side. The polycarbonate material is shock-resistant and robust, bendable, UV/ozone resistant and thus also suitable for outdoor areas.



"We just received our new route card holders. They're even better than expected and just what we needed. Thank you!!!"

Lee Browning
(Managing Director at The Boardroom Climbing, UK)





SMART SCORECARD

SIMPLE AND HASSLE FREE CONTEST SCORING

Do you know that feeling of stress and anxiety, trying to get the correct results out to a waiting crowd at your event?

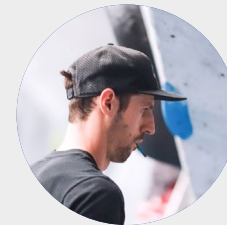
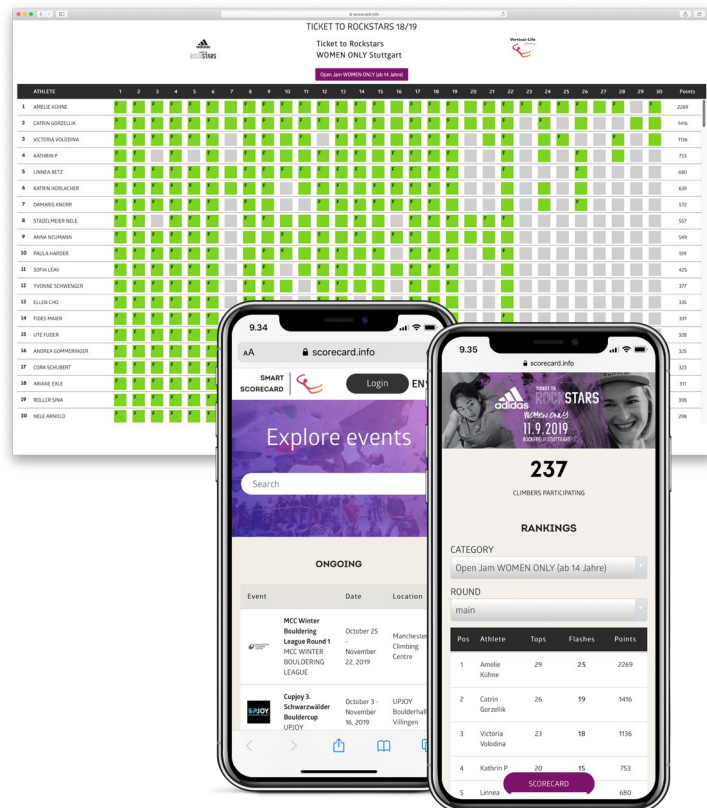
The Smart Scorecard by Vertical-Life puts an end to paper registration and scoring and offers a series of benefits for organizers and climbers.

BENEFITS FOR ORGANIZERS:

- » Real-time results
- » Flexible scoring formats
- » Multiple categories and rounds
- » Judge mode

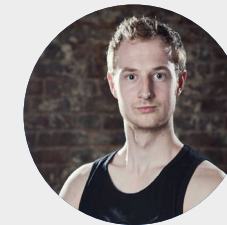
BENEFITS FOR CLIMBERS:

- » Quick online registration
- » Live rankings
- » Intuitive logging of scores on smartphones



"The Smart Scorecard from Vertical-Life has been a complete game-changer for us at The Climbing Hangar. Not only can customers feel more engaged with tension building live scoring, but the event runs so much smoother, there is no more waiting at the end of the night - it is instantaneous, exciting and brings real drama to the competition format. It's one of those things that has, in one step, made everything about competitions better."

Dan Knight
(Climbing Director,
The Climbing Hangar UK)



"We've been using the Scorecard for three years now. As an event organiser, it saves the team so much time and hassle. The Scorecard is a real life saver for us. Thanks to its automated scoring, it helps us pull off 12 categories in the qualification rounds and finals with more than 500 participants in one day! It's super easy for our participants to enter their scores and they love the added benefit of live results, which we display throughout the gym during the events. I can no longer imagine putting on a comp without it!"

Mike Langley
(Event organizer, Head Route Setter
at the Castle Climbing Centre UK and
IFSC commentator)



"The Vertical-Life Smart Scorecard is an integral element of our global adidas Ticket to Rockstars event series, because it enables us to run our all-inclusive grassroots bouldering jams with a user-friendly self-scoring system. Our T2R Smart Scorecard includes tailor-made functions that were specifically developed for us based on our needs, like a voucher system, participant certificates or a loyalty program. It helps us to create sustainable events with a long-lasting consumer experience."

Mike Hamel
(Event director Adidas Rockstars /
Ticket to Rockstars series)





boulder@do We make it POSSible.



READY . STEADY . GO BOULDERADO!

The Boulderado POS system is on the market since 2013 and is constantly evolving. It is optimized for all boulder and climbing gyms and more than 150 clients in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain use our very fast windows based touch system at the front desk, shop, café and for general retail.

CHECKIN

Fast and easy you can use single entries, punch cards, subscriptions entries via credit and more.



CUSTOMER TERMINAL & FAST LANE

Speed up the registration process and use our Fast Lane for customer entries with punch cards, subscription or credit.



RETAIL & MEMBER MANAGEMENT

Manage your entries, punch cards, season tickets, specials and vouchers as well as managing your shop items, members, statistics and users.



SUBSCRIPTIONS

Organize your member subscriptions and debit all payments by a monthly export or any other payment period.



INVENTORY SYSTEM

Control your stock, categorize your products, scan with a barcode and assemble orders for missing stock.

REPORTING

A variety of statistics and evaluations are available for export to be analysed. On request we can realize the creation of individual statistics.

SYNC

Discounts, season tickets, punch cards and more can be synced between different locations using Boulderado. Groups of halls can share season tickets and discounts through a network, offering customers more variety.

SERVICE

With lot of experience in our field, our team will support you in all aspects regarding the configuration and usage.

HARDWARE

We offer a robust and reliable hardware systems including POS peripherals but we also advise on individual or existing hardware.

ACCESSORIES

Member passes, barcode & RFID cards - comfortable accessories are easily integrated.

INTERFACES

For course and staff planning, Boulderado works closely with Vertical Life. Mobile Checkin and mobile pay will soon be realized. Access controls such as turnstiles and cabinet systems of our partners can also be integrated.





www.4ds.biz

CLIMBING MEET ENGINEERING

4DS was founded in 2007 as an engineering office designing buildings, bridges, rope parks and climbing walls. Due to the growing needs and the rapid development of the climbing industry, the company concentrates its activity entirely in the design, production and installation of climbing walls and boulders.

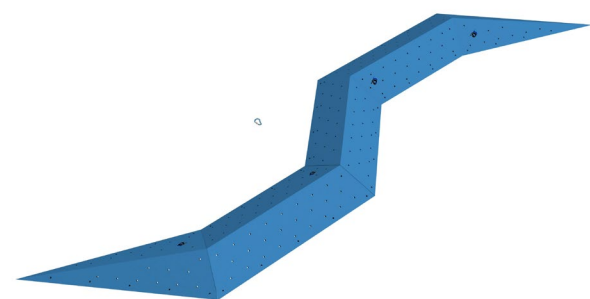
Since 2010, we have built some of the most popular boulder gyms in Germany.

CLIMBING VOLUMES

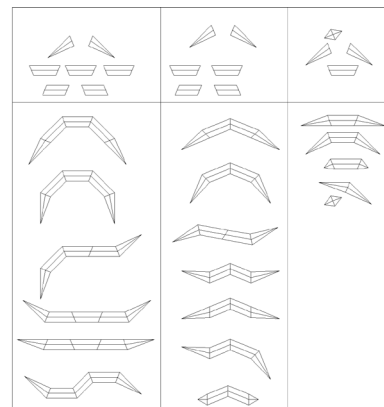
We are producing more than 30 models of climbing volumes. Each one in 3 sizes and most of them with mirrored version. Our volumes are characterized by:

- » lightweight, made of thin 18mm birch plywood,
- » strong, smooth grip,
- » surface and body durability, special washer inserts
- » huge variety of colours, almost all RAL colours.

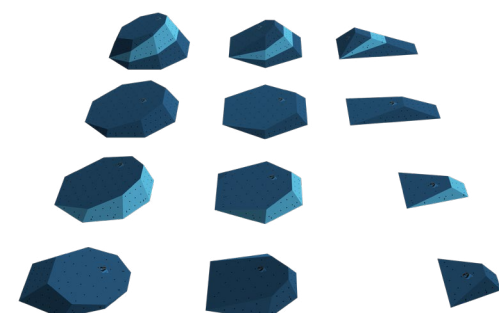
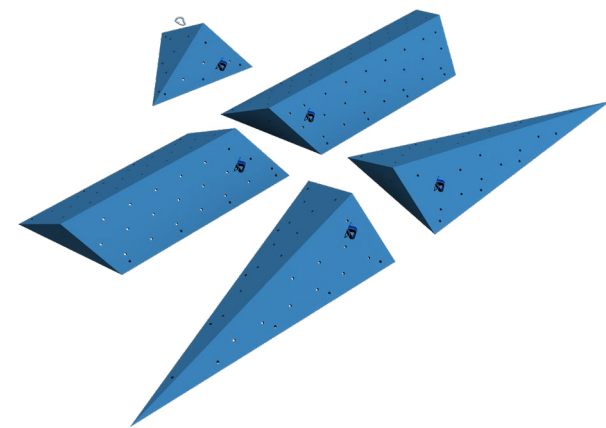
To increase the route settings variety, we have developed 2 types of combined volumes:



Snakes: our newest route setter toy! With just 5 different volumes you can get more than 50 longitudinal combinations.



At the end of 2017, together with the designer Alexander Dimitrov, we have developed Flat Curves. It is a smooth, spatially curved surface approximated in planes thanks to computational software. The purpose of Flat Curves is to achieve a smooth, curved look combined with plane surfaces to allow placement of large volumes and holds on them.



Slices: volumes perfectly fitted to each other in height, fixed together with bolts



Photo: Malin Cooper Williams

CLIMBING WALLS

If you are looking for a company to build your climbing walls or boulders on time, in quality and at a reasonable price, then we are your partner.

There is no impossible design for our engineers. Our climbing walls could be with wooden or steel construction.

From an engineering point of view, the biggest challenges are the outside self-standing structures with a small base, as well as the placement of relatively heavy climbing walls in existing multi-storey buildings above the first floor. We are dealing successfully with both!

Behind the successful functioning of each climbing gym stand the successful design of the climbing surface and its placement in the space. Our designs are distinguished by their impressive vision and functionality. The integration of the climbing walls in the building takes into account the existing structures, lighting, ventilation, entrances and evacuation exits, training and comfort zones, warehouses and changing rooms.

During our 16 years of experience in the design of artificial climbing walls, we have witnessed and participated in the evolution of the climbing surface.

In the beginning, most of the walls were designed from rectangular surfaces with different configurations of the angles between them in height. Rectangular, practical and easy, but what about the vision?

Some of the biggest manufacturers have used standard rectangular or 3D fiberglass panels. Nice vision, but all the same permanent holds.

With the development of the technology, the climbing surface has evolved to freely located planes in the space, smoothly bent plywood or fiberglass imitation of rocks and casts of real rocks.

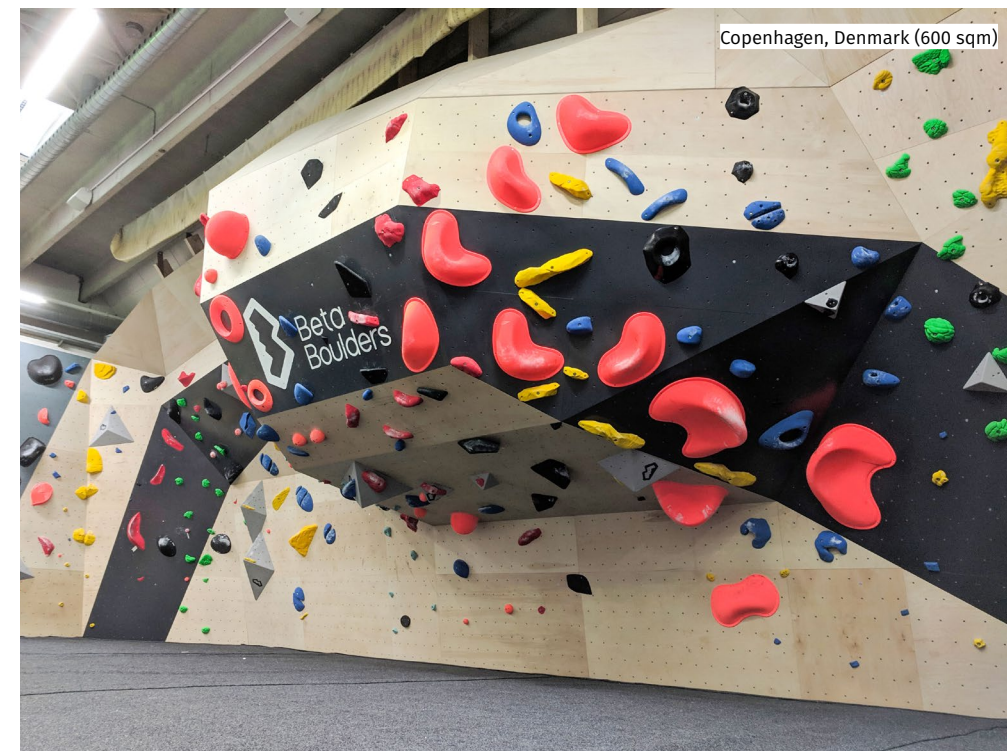
To keep the climbers interested, it is important the climbing routes to be changed frequently. Lately, the climbing surfaces are made of large planes with smooth angles to one another, and the relief is changed with plywood volumes. Therefore, Flat Curves is an evolutionary climbing surface that combines vision and functionality.



CITYWALL CLIMBING WALLS

Citywall, as a brand, has been present in the climbing industry for more than 20 years. **We live and breathe climbing walls.** We execute every project with total devotion and focus, no detail is neglected. In

the execution of the project, nothing can be left to chance. Because everything is planned, we can complete our projects with maximum time efficiency and with minimal deviations.



In terms of design, we strive towards creativity, that enables us to combine optimal space management, functionality and diversity. We cooperate with our client to **achieve the envisioned goal with minimal resources.**

We are also the fastest company in terms of project fulfilment, and this is what sets us apart from the competition.



QUALITY AND SAFETY

Quality and safety of our products are our number one priorities. For our projects, we use only premium materials from verified suppliers, that help us to create a safe and durable product. When choosing technologies and construction techniques, we work with our clients to find the optimal solution.

We offer wood, iron, aluminium, or combined substructure, which enables diverse and bold designs of different climbing components. The climbing wall surface can be coloured in any colour combination, we also offer sanded or transparent climbing wall texture.



CUSTOM CLIMBING WALLS? WE BUILD IT ALL.

We are a total-solution provider and can take care of any kind of climbing associated project:

- » from indoor and outdoor
- » high and boulder walls
- » climbing walls for schools
- » self-standing climbing towers
- » mobile towers on a trailer
- » climbing walls for pools
- » private home walls
- » any other custom-made climbing structure



FIBERGLASS (GRP) WALLS

We are also specialized in **fiberglass (GRP) walls**, which are much more resistant to external factors and to abrasion. We can also take care of matting and other additional infrastructure, such as stairs, galleries, fences, door, furniture and other carpenter services. Our passion for climbing and enthusiasm over movement, inspired our developers to constantly create new ideas and concepts, that result in the variety of our products.



"We are a fast expanding, creative and technologically advanced business partner, that dedicates fully to every project and offer 24/7 availability to our customers with immediate response."

Contact us for more information: info@citywall.eu



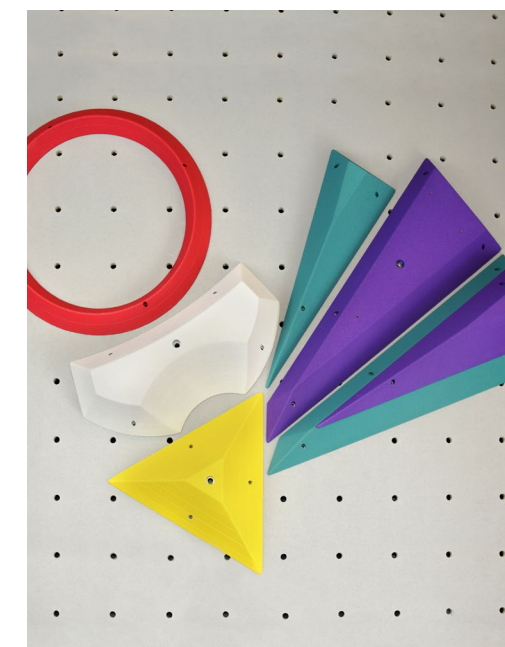
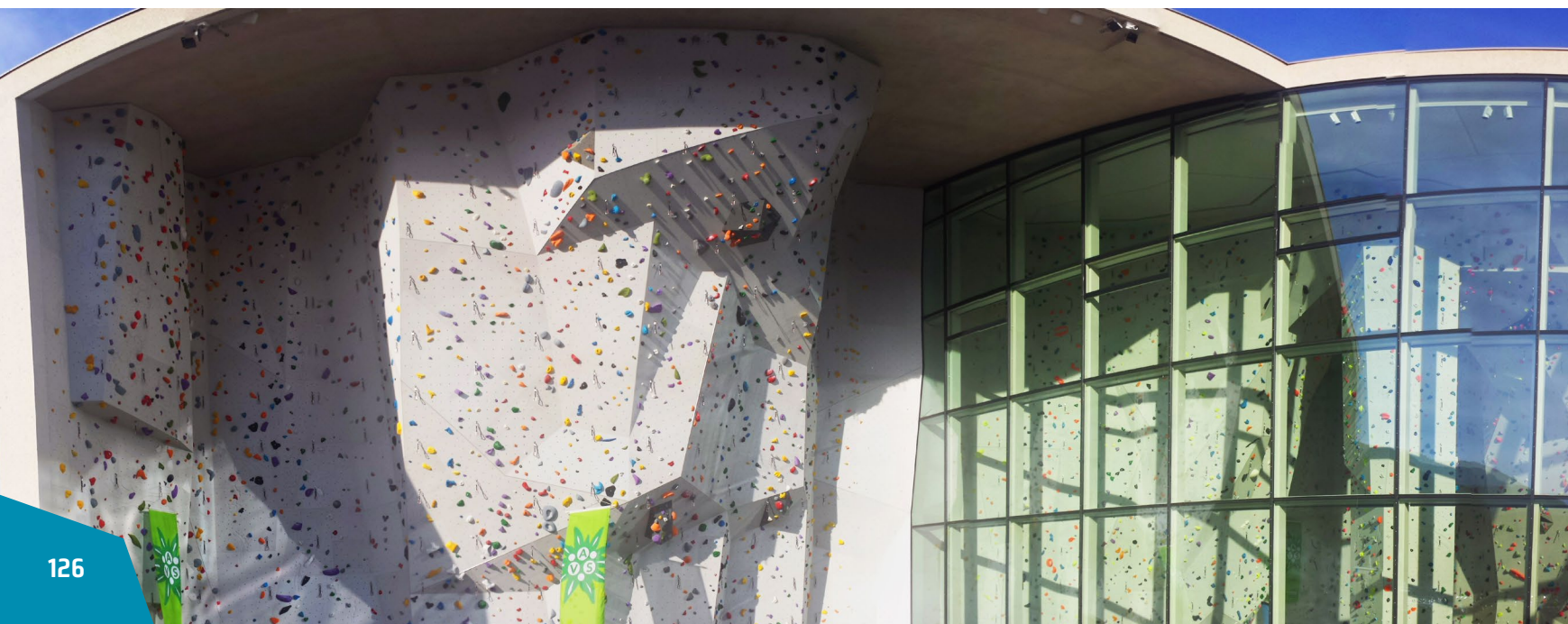
SHAPING THE HISTORY



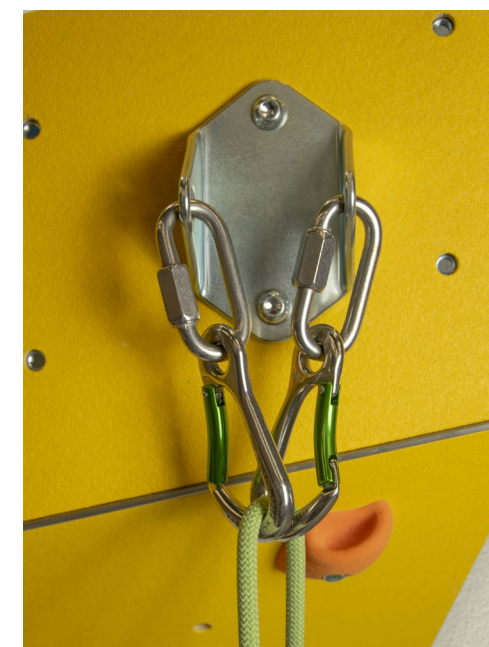
With almost 30 years history Sint Roc has gained a unique experience designing, constructing and installing artificial climbing walls. Our headquarter is located at Arco - the world's sport climbing capital - and the constant contact with climbers of all abilities enables us to know and anticipate the market trends. Hundreds of artificial structures carry out Sint Roc brand, from local schools to commercial climbing centres.

Our decade-long partnership as official suppliers of Rock Master, coupled with company founder Angelo Seneci's vast experience at organizing events, enables us to design cutting-edge competition structures.

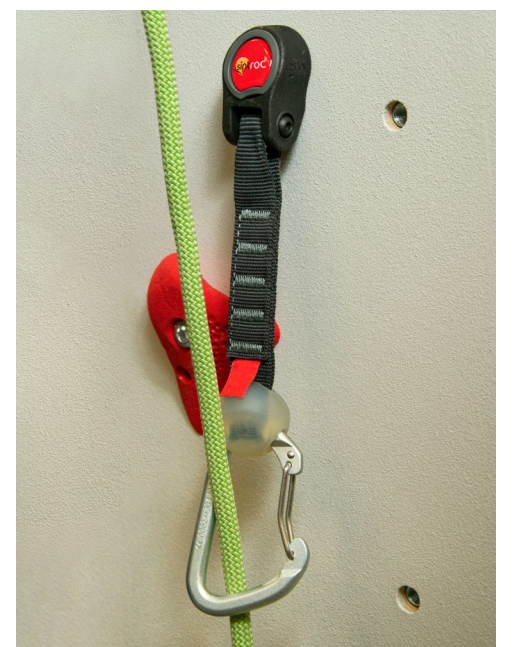
Since 2015 we are an IFSC certified Speed Wall Manufacturer.



STRATEX
New plywood volumes, innovative and curve shapes. A new assembly method guarantees mechanical high resistance. Suitable to be bolt on the T-nuts to reduce panels damages, wood screw holes equipped with steel washer. Gently friction coating.

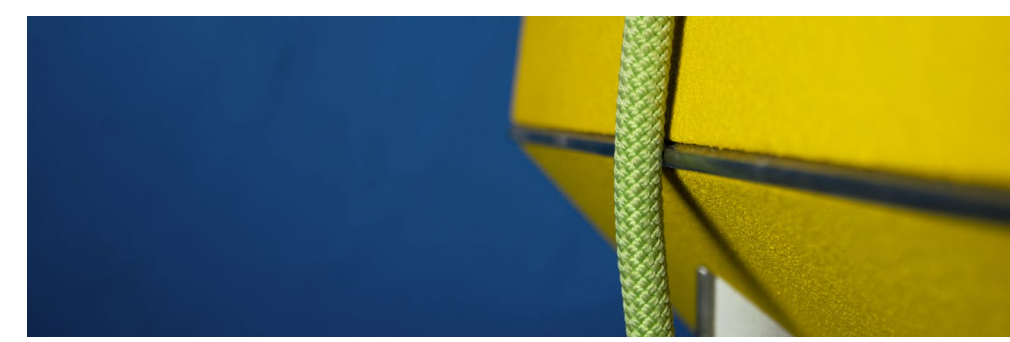


TOP BELAY POINT
Stainless steel plate assembled directly to the supporting frame with two M12 self-locking screws. Two independent rope anchor points on the same route enable for a top rope and, simultaneously, an abseil point for lead climbing.



INTERMEDIATE PROTECTION POINT
New intermediate protection point reducing noise, wall and sling wear, avoiding fingers trap risk.

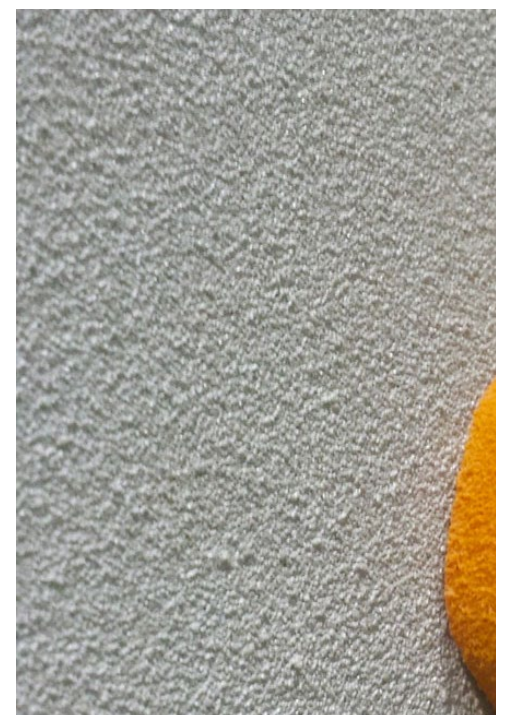
HIGH QUALITY CLIMBING STRUCTURES



EDGE PROTECTION POINT
All edges that can wear the climbing rope are protected by our built-in system that guarantees: low visual impact, functionality and safety, long-term resistance.



HIGH RESISTANCE HOLD INSERTS
All our panels are equipped with an exclusive large surface insert (40x40 mm, high resistance thread, fixed with two 4,5x20 screws).



PANEL COATING
Our DURA FINISH coating is appreciated throughout Europe for its excellent friction, resistance to wear and tear and above all for its easy cleaning.



Bänfer[®]
SPORTMANUFAKTUR

Boulderwelt Munich east 2.0

www.baenfer.de

For bouldering mats the first priority is to minimize the risk of injury. We are aware of this requirement and we produce our fall protection mats with that concern mind. All mats are designed according to the latest knowledge in climbing and bouldering, but also from experiences that we draw on from other sports.

We manufacture the ideal mat for every application, from landing mats for school sports facilities to fall protection mats for children's areas and bouldering mats for indoor and outdoor use.

All our mats are professionally planned and installed in accordance with current fall protection and bouldering standards.

In particular, our customers beginner areas and vertical walls are reinforced with a stronger foam, which allows our customers to enjoy our professional fall protection system for a longer period of time.



Boulderwelt Dortmund

QUALITY AND SAFETY FIRST MADE IN GERMANY

Since 1984, we have been producing, developing and selling sports mats and equipment for several sports disciplines. Thanks to this hands on experience and our high production quality standards, we have been able to recruit renowned athletes and coaches to help us develop innovations that lead to safer and softer landings.

From the middle of Germany to the global marketplace

With the production facility in Bad Wildungen, with over 70 employees, we are located in the middle of Germany and can supply our customers quickly and reliably. Our sports manufactory unites several production areas for sports products under one roof. Thanks to our own fleet of vehicles, we can act individually and satisfy our customers even with special delivery requests

Our bouldering and project development team

Andre Friderritz has been our in house expert in matting and upholstery in all areas of fall protection for over 30 years. Together with Andrea Rothe, they are members of the DIN standards committee for artificial climbing structures and experts in the DIN standards committee for trampoline parks.

Nick Spohr is our company's organizational talent. He's behind the scenes managing the assignments of our fitters in Germany and abroad.

Our sales team advises our customers with a level of competence that comes with a 35 year track record of success in terms of quality and safety.

Matting measurements are taken on site by our qualified personnel, so that the production and assembly can be carried out with worry free precision.



Boulderwelt Munich east 2.0



Boulderwelt Dortmund

Our bouldering mat "Exklusiv Typ 2" is topped with carpet and is equipped with a combination core that features 30 mm tread distribution area and a softer secondary layer of foam. It's perfect for optimum power reduction and safer landings.

Clean and individual fall protection possibilities

In order to be able to benefit from all the advantages of our multiple surfaces (our carpet surface reduces dirt on climbing holds and our tarpaulin surface allows for easy cleaning and sterilization), our customers can combine carpet and tarpaulin surfaces in their planning.

Edges, steps, curves, columns and T-beams pose no problems for us. We equip your problem areas individually with the appropriate drop and impact protection.

With the use of special paints for tarpaulins, custom coloring of all mat areas is also possible.

Wherever we go, we promise your customers can follow (and fall!).



SPORTMAT EXPERIENCE

Big Ape is an intuition and a novelty for the sports world, indoor and outdoor. It is a **Made in Italy** company specialized in the production of sports mattresses, with a focus on the indoor and outdoor Climbing and Bouldering.

Big Ape is constantly engaged in developing the **quality** of its products through the use of **first-rate materials** of European origin. Added to this is the use of **technologically advanced** production machinery, equipment and facilities.

BIG APE - MATTRESSES FOR CLIMBING AND BOULDERING

- » EXTREME QUALITY
- » ELECTRO-WELDED TO PERFECTION
- » ENTIRELY CUSTOMIZABLE



www.bigape.it

EXTREME QUALITY

Our sports mattresses are designed to last over time, thanks to highly selected raw materials such as 90% of PVC of European origin. They are made of matted, or non-slip embossed, **650 gr/sqm PVC fabric**, with different densities depending on the discipline.

ELECTRO-WELDED TO PERFECTION

The strength of Big Ape mattresses is the electro-welding process. All our products are welded and finished in every detail to withstand any strain or traction.

The special non-slip embossed fabric offers perfect adherence, to cushion the impact with the ground and minimize the risk of falling.

ENTIRELY CUSTOMIZABLE

Customize your Big Ape mattress in the size, density or shape you prefer and add your favorite logo or graphic to make it even more unique!

Visit www.bigape.it to request more information



Photo: Norbert-Freudenthaler.com

IT'S ABOUT SAFETY

Since 1954, REGUPOL has manufactured sport flooring, safety surfacing, impact sound insulation, and many other products from polyurethane-bonded rubber granulate. The owner-managed industrial enterprise has developed into one of the leading providers in the industry by virtue of its constant optimisation of tried and tested manufacturing processes, the development of new products and solutions for the most diverse industrial and services sectors, and international expansion.

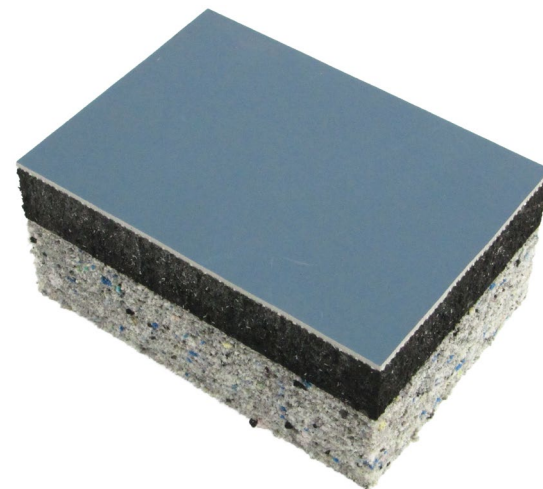
REGUPOL is one of the international market leaders in many product groups. REGUPOL developments and innovations are a result of systematic product and market research. The company operates on a global scale with eight production and distribution sites and around 700 employees worldwide.

Numerous climbing halls in Germany and abroad have been installed with different special floorings for climbing halls from REGUPOL.

REGUGYM® CLIMB 45/30 PU

There are many design options for this elastic safety flooring. Our huge colour range allows you to define the safety zone with different colours or markings. Furthermore you have the possibility to place your logo on the floor. This elastic sports flooring ensures that the seriousness of any injuries from falls can be minimised. With its seamless surface regugym climb is very easy to clean.

Reaction to fire: CfL-s1 as per DIN EN 13501-1



REGUGYM® CLIMB 40 PU

This indoor flooring is perfectly suitable for climbing halls with under-floor heating. Both regugym® climb 40 PU and regugym® climb 45/30 PU are installed by experts of REGUPOL. The severity of the consequences suffered by climbers falling from critical heights is considerably reduced. Furthermore you can choose between 16 basic colours and 15 line colours to individualize your flooring.

Reaction to fire: Bfl-s1 as per DIN EN 13501-1



REGUPOL® SAFETY TILE FX 110

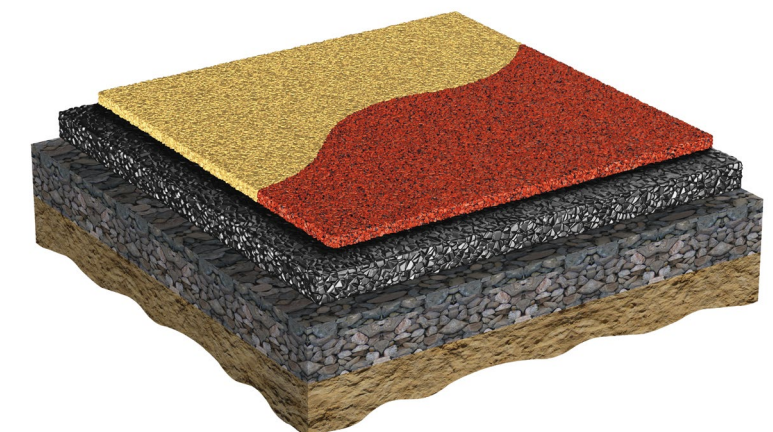
This outdoor flooring is permeable to water and dries quickly. It is used at outside climbing walls and protects them against pollution. You can select between different qualities and thicknesses. This elastic tile has been installed on children's playgrounds for decades. It warrants reliable protection pursuant to EN 1177 for critical fall heights.

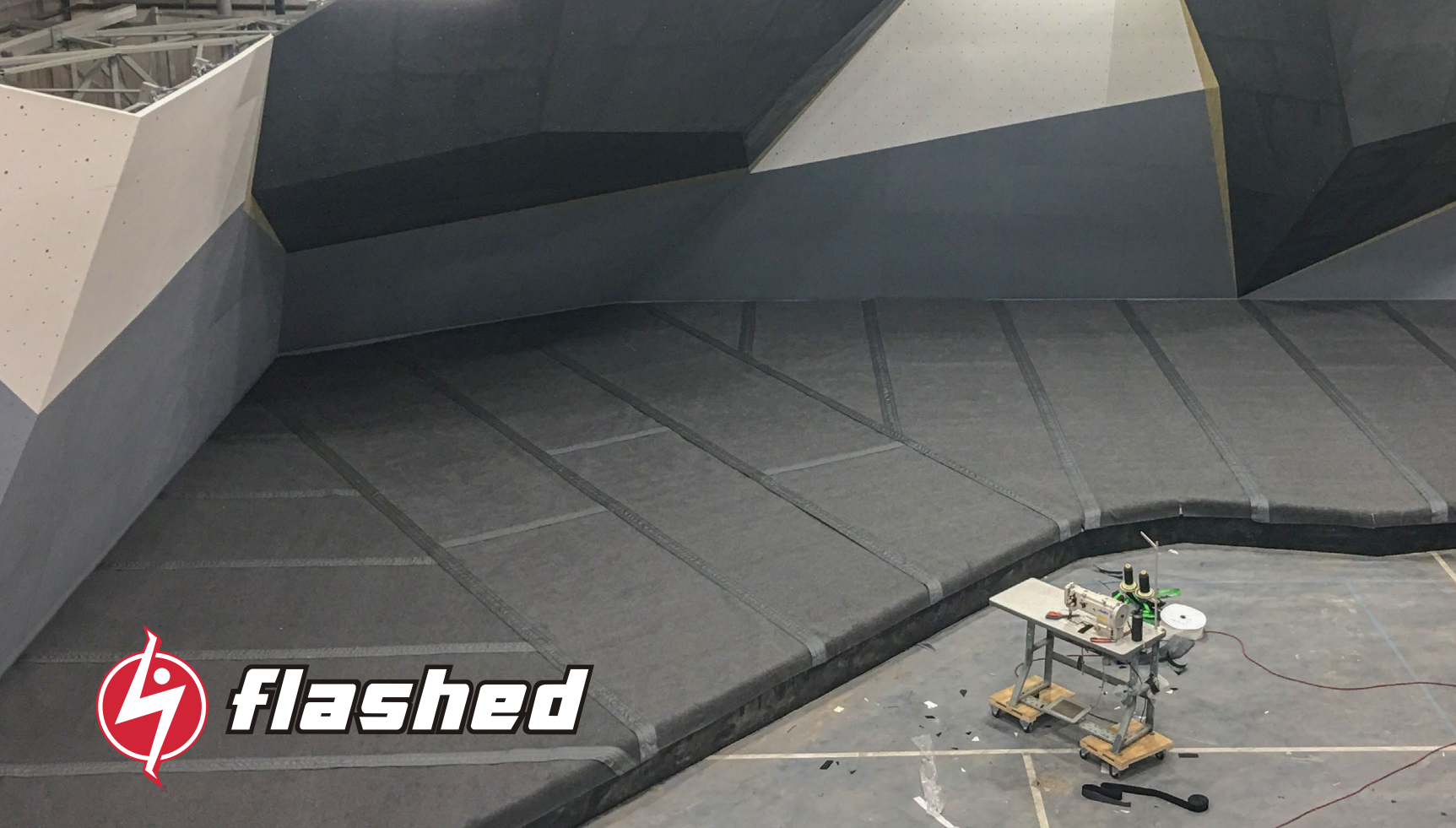
Dimensions: 1,000 x 500 x 110 mm, other thicknesses possible

PLAYFIX® SEAMLESS SAFETY SURFACING

Create your individual outdoor flooring with 26 colours and their combinations. Thanks to its water permeability, you can use the flooring again quickly after it has rained. Originally developed for impact absorption on playgrounds, this flooring has also proved itself in a range of different sports activities, in which the risk of injuring from falling needs to be minimised. It complies with standard EN 1177 for safety surfaces.

Installation: Only by skilled REGUPOL technicians.

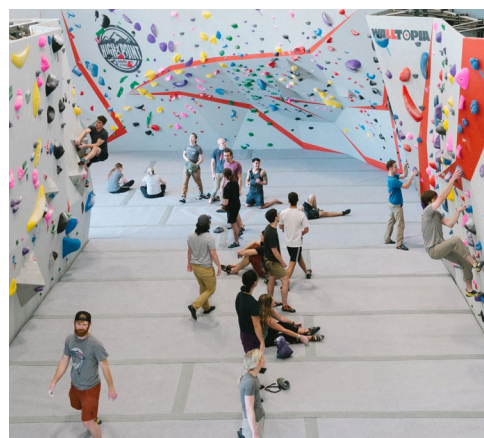




FLASHED - CLIMB FREE, CLIMB FEARLESSLY

At Flashed, we have spent years defining the industry standard for gym padding. Our innovative approach to materials, design and testing – along with our unwavering commitment to improve the climbing experience – results in world class products, every time.

Flashed has redefined the standards of high-performance climbing equipment—Crash Pads, Pure Chalk, Chalk Bags, Accessories, Gym Products and Apparel. We design every item with intent to perform at the highest level.



COMPOSITE

Innovation is bred from necessity. The result is a vinyl base that has benefits of hygiene and steam cleaning, laminated directly to a rugged carpet with special backing to give unparalleled feel, support, cleanliness, and performance. This product keeps step with increased traffic while delivering an experience that climbers will notice.



CORDURA

This material has been used in heavy duty applications for its abrasion and tensile strengths for decades. We have padding systems over 7 years old that are still using the original 1000d nylon in facilities that are among the busiest in the nation. Nothing speaks louder than the proof of experience.



VINYL

This material boasts the most hygienic benefits due to its impermeability and doesn't soak or hold any liquids. Our 22oz stretch vinyl has a specific plastic compound to combat the cracking and peeling that will last and perform to a high degree.



FONT PAD

A versatile and stylish briefcase pad. 1" of closed cell foam covered with 1680 Ballistic nylon outside and fleece inside make this perfect for cleaning shoes, low-balls, covering side rocks, or as a seam sealer. An internal organizer keeps all your gear neatly together.



DRIFTER PAD

The hinge pad refined. The Drifter is designed with standard luxury features and will be your trusty companion as you roam between your favourite bouldering destinations. We've built ease of use, versatility, and longevity into its core creating a more refined experience.



SETTER BUCKET - 10G / 19G

Design began over 4yrs ago as Routesetters contacted us for custom setting equipment. Several of the largest gyms in the industry have provided feedback using years of experience. We're proud to present the finished working product for Routesetters. Made from the strongest materials around, be sure to consider these products for your professional Kit. Plastic bucket not included.



BILLY BUCKET

The Billy Bucket is an accessories packing dream! Big enough for two hands and small enough to fit in any bag. Zipper compartments for all your personals, elastic holders for brushes and pouches on the back and front. A roll-top closure makes sure chalk stays where it's supposed to – in your chalk bag.



SLICKFOOT CHALK BAG

Long days on multi-pitch routes or boulder circuits are a breeze for the Slickfoot. A large full side zip pocket means you can stuff your smartphone, keys, energy bar, and even a compressible windshell inside. Go fast, and stay out all day!



FINGER TAPE

If your fingers are feeling the strain from pulling on rocks or plastic this tape will keep your digits in place. Flashed Finger tape provides support to your tendons and pulleys while you climb through the grades with confidence.



CHUNKY CHALK

Flashed Premium Chalk is specifically selected for superior absorption, without harmfully over drying your hands. There are no unhealthy drying agents or additives, so you can move with confidence knowing that you have the best friction.



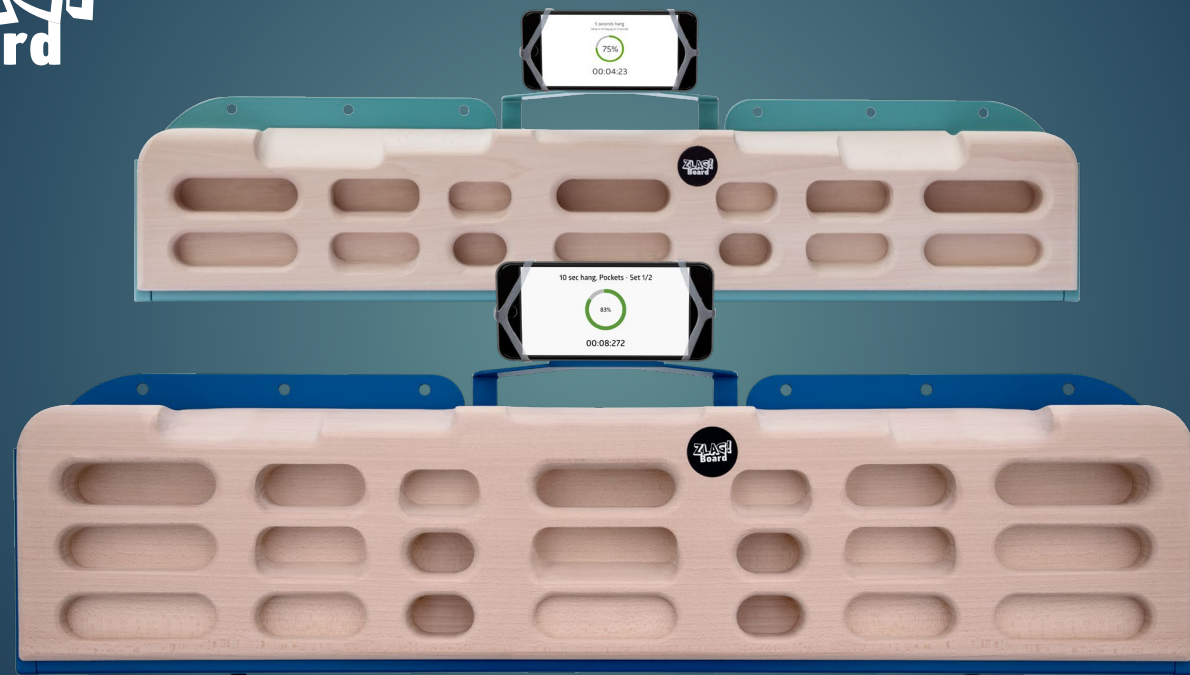
PODIUM LIQUID CHALK

For climbers who train hard. If you demand professional-grade performance, this high-endurance liquid chalk won't quit when the pressure dials up.



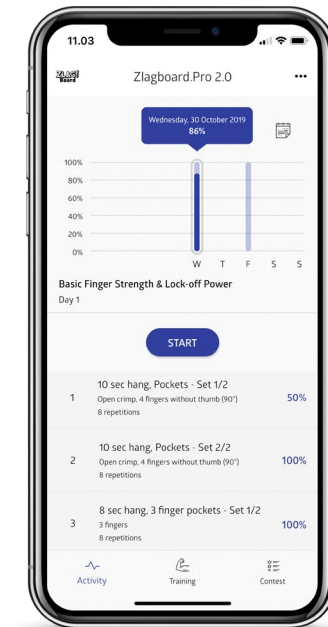
SUMI BRUSH

The Sumi Brush was custom designed for climbing. Longer bristles for durability, a secondary brush for tight spots, and made of biodegradable material, the Sumi Brush really has it all.

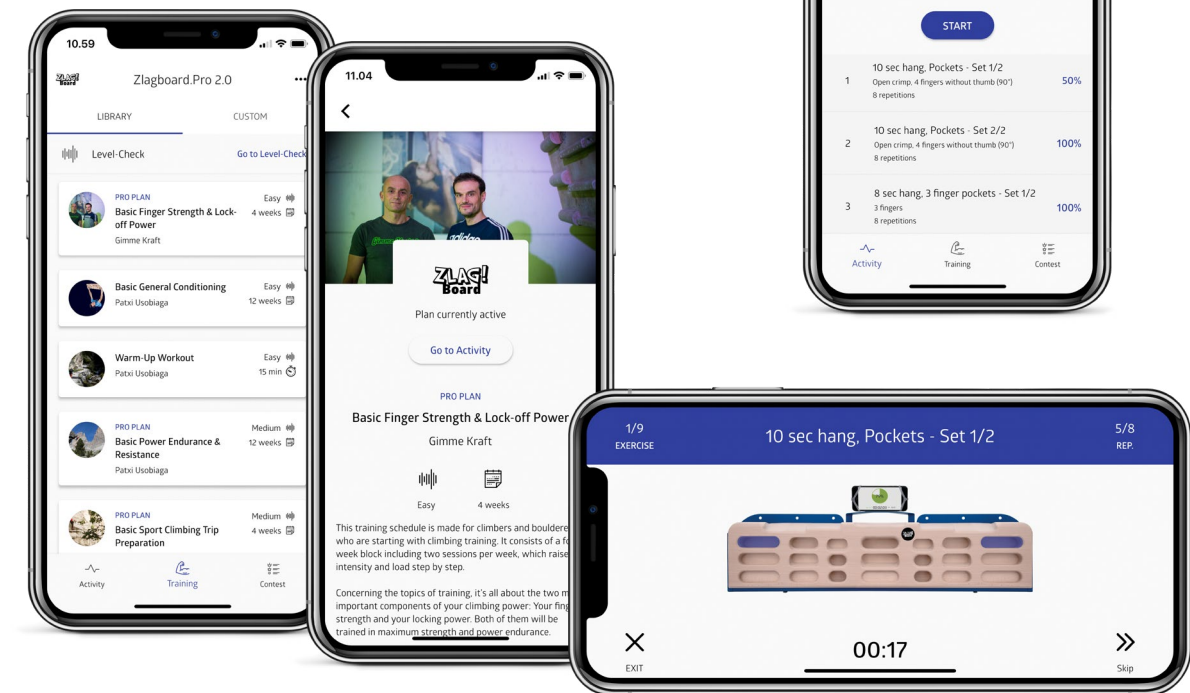


ZLAGBOARD APP

The Zlagboard app brings cutting edge training knowledge right to your fingertips! Zlagboard teamed up with some of the best coaches to develop hangboard training programs. You no longer have to worry about figuring out how to best structure a correct hangboard training. The training plans are designed for the specific requirements of different fitness levels and goals.



TRACK YOUR IMPROVEMENTS
Performances (completion rates) are saved in the training log, allowing you to get detailed statistics.



ZLAGBOARD - TRAIN SMART, CLIMB HARD! MORE THAN THE AVERAGE HANGBOARD FOR CLIMBERS!

Paired with its app, the award winning Zlagboard puts an end to hand-written notes, spreadsheets and stop-watches to estimate hang-times. The Zlagboard system does the job for you, using a weight-triggered mechanism for smartphones to precisely track the duration of every hang/rest as well as number of pull-ups. The app structures a whole training cycle and every session for you, giving detailed instructions about the single exercises, repetitions and rest times.



"I got on the Zlagboard at Café Kraft and I realized that this board was the first major innovation in the hangboard in 20 years. Such a great design and functionality, and as a researcher and coach, I say that it's a tool with endless possibilities."

Eric Hörst

(Coach and author of the best selling book "Training for climbing" - over 175.000 copies sold)

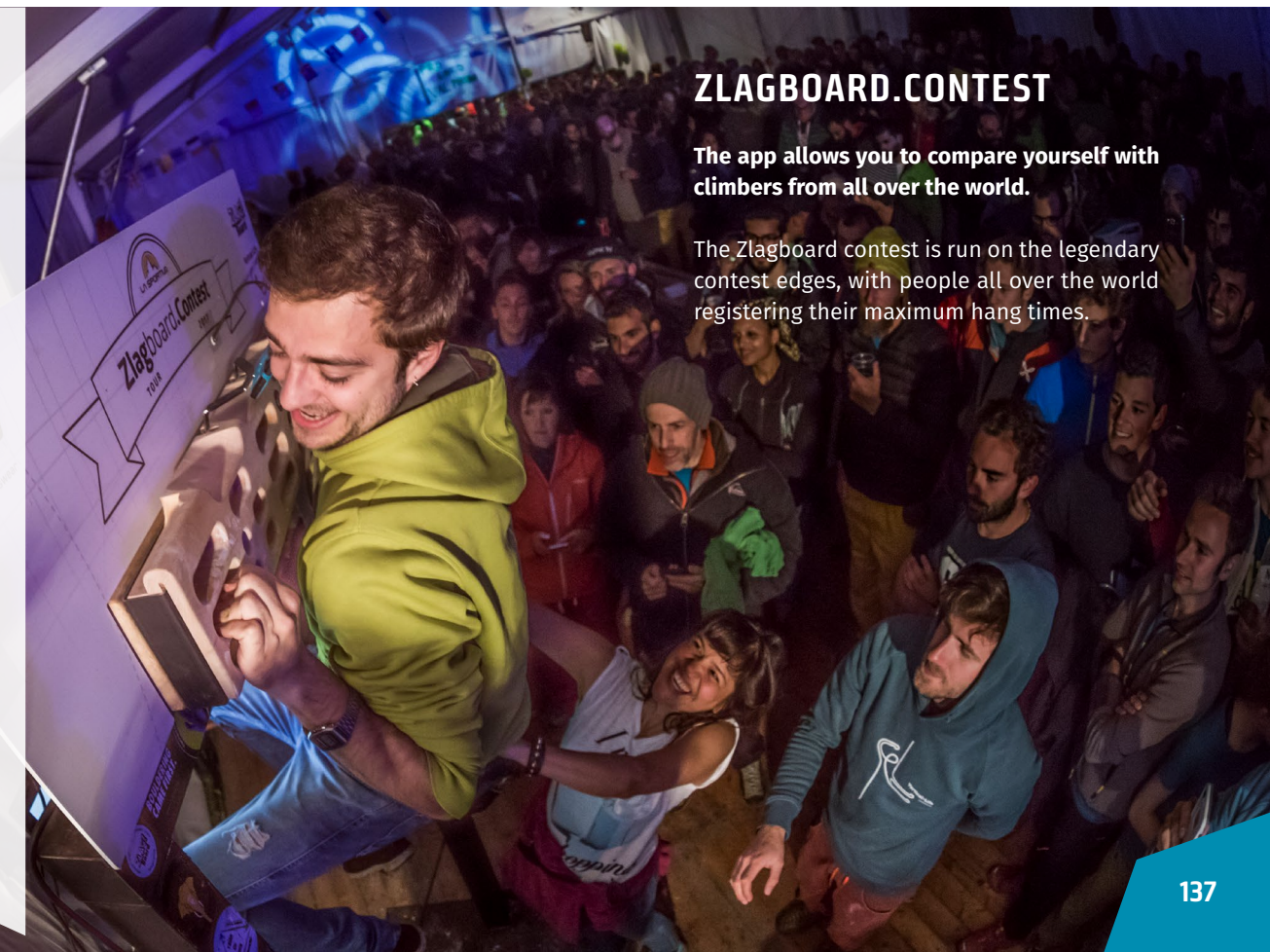


100% MADE IN SOUTH TYROL

All Zlagboards are manufactured by craftsmen in our home region of South Tyrol in the heart of the Alps.

★ ★ ★ Zlagboard Contest World Ranking

1. Ramon Julian Puigblanque
02:44.35
2. Elan Jonas-McRae
02:25.80
3. Ethan Jordan
02:20.50
4. Dmitry Fakiryarov
02:16.22
5. Peeters Harold
02:16.03
6. Eric Lopez
02:14.06
7. Alexander Megos
02:11.89
8. Stefano Ghisolfi
02:09.66



ZLAGBOARD.CONTEST

The app allows you to compare yourself with climbers from all over the world.

The Zlagboard contest is run on the legendary contest edges, with people all over the world registering their maximum hang times.



KRAXL-BOARD. AUTHENTIC. STRONG.

Kraxlboard products originate from the heart of South Tyrol, surrounded by some of the most beautiful mountain sceneries to be found on this planet and home of world-famous climbers and alpinists. It is here that in 2014, master carpenter Georg Oberrauch was inspired by his friends to build a training board.

Thanks to a flawless fabrication from multilayer beech wood and a variety of grip shapes, pocket depths and slants the Kraxlboard is esthetic in appearance and versatile in functionality. It offers climbers of all levels a diverse and challenging training experience.

To up the challenge a variety of add-ons, such as the Pegboard, slopers and rings, turn our board into a multifunctional gem. Further training devices such as the Snake Pull-up Bar and the Coreboard complete the Kraxlboard product range, providing all you climbers out there with fun and diverse training options.



KRAXLBOARD ROCK

This sophisticated Kraxlboard offers extremely diverse ways to train your finger and arm strength. It comes with various rungs on 3 levels - with varying pocket depths, shapes and angles, a pair of roughened slopers on the top and two 80 mm round slopers on the bottom for your pinch grip training. The generous jugs help you finish off your fatigued arms.



ROUND SLOPERS

These solid wood slopers are a nifty add-on for the Kraxlboard Rock. They come in pairs, with a diameter of 150 mm and an elaborately ribbed finishing.



PEGBOARD

Made from exceptionally resilient laminated beech wood our pegboard is suitable for direct mounting on a wall. Delivery includes 4 beech wood pegs and mounting screws. The pegboard is great for your arm workout and for training your ice climbing skills!



SNAKE PULL-UP BAR

Our Snake Pull-up Bar is specially shaped so that it meets the anatomical requirements of the human body. When you grasp a straight bar, your wrists bend unnaturally, thus causing contusion. This is why our Snake bar uses different angles to ensure healthy and pleasant training. Made from multilayer beech wood, this innovative pull-up bar is not only exceptionally resilient, but also convinces with its skin-friendly haptics and appealing design.



KRAXLBOARD TO GO

Minimally measured – extremely multifunctional.

The board offers a wide range of different rungs and jugs with various depths and angles. Thanks to the lateral handles of the board, already fatigued arms can be finished off to extremes. Our sophisticated suspension device allows to freely adjust the inclination by a simple hand movement. In other words: the board can satisfy the needs of climbers of all levels. Thanks to the rounded edges on the back of the board, the jugs can be gripped on both sides, which guarantees a still larger range of motion. The ring bolts, which are fixed onto the bottom of the Kraxlboard To Go, allow to expand the board with other training devices such as our training spheres or gymnastic rings. In this way, your training possibilities will be greatly enlarged.

COREBOARD ADVANCED SET

This Kraxlboard product ensures efficient training for the whole body. Thanks to the ball casters mounted on the bottom side, our Coreboard can be rotated in any direction, making it a very versatile tool for your roll out training. By exchanging the casters with optionally one or two wooden half-spheres or a wooden roller, the board can be used as a balance board for "instability" exercises.





Access
the
inaccessible®

Photo: Petzl - Sam Bié



ASAP®

With its unique locking system, the ASAP sets the standard in fall protection for workers at height. In normal use, the device moves freely along the rope without any manual intervention and follows the user in all his/her movements. In case of shock or sudden acceleration, the ASAP locks on the rope and stops the user. The ASAP may also be combined with an ASAP'SORBER or ASAP'SORBER AXESS energy absorber to work at a distance from the rope. Recommended to use with an OK RIACT-LOCK carabiner.



RIG

RIG is a compact self-braking descender designed for experienced rope access workers. It has an ergonomic handle that allows comfortable descent control. The AUTO-LOCK system allows users to easily position themselves at the work station without having to manipulate the handle or tie off the device. Once locked, the rope can be taken up without having to manipulate the handle. The safety gate allows the rope to be installed with the device remaining connected to the harness.

DON'T TAKE THE RISK

In general standards like **EN** and **UIAA** are developed to give assurance of the intended purpose of a product. Once it has been externally tested (i.e. by **TÜV**) to meet the standard and therefore carries the CE sign, it is ready to use. But testing is only required every 5 years, so what happens if the production chain is changing in the meantime? This is where **ISO 9001** has its grand appearance: it gives you information about the persistent production quality and therefore the quality of the product. Petzl is constantly working on progress and happy to provide high quality products and technical expertise wherever a solution is needed.

Still talking in riddles? The Petzl Technical Institute PTI can help! We offer trainings and workshops especially developed to meet the needs of gym operators, competent persons and route setters to make your decisions and daily business easier. www.petzl-training.com



EASYTOP WALL

EASYTOP WALL is a complete anchor system designed for indoor climbing gyms. The design of the carabiner allows very easy clipping with just one hand. The system is extremely durable, thanks to the steel frame, the reliable locking system and the structure's protective shell. Installation is simple, and compatible with most climbing walls. Inspection pin for rapid and easy inspection included.



GRIGRI®+

GRIGRI+ is a belay device with assisted braking and anti-panic handle. Compatible with single ropes from 8.5 to 11 mm and equipped with exceptional descent control. Its wear plate makes it suitable for intensive use. Two belay modes are available: top-rope or lead climbing. The top-rope mode and the anti-panic handle make the GRIGRI + particularly suitable for learning how to belay.



ASTRO® SIT FAST

The ASTRO SIT FAST rope access seat harness features a gated ventral attachment point that allows optimal integration of equipment (rope clamp, lanyard, seat...). Wide, semi-rigid waistbelt and leg loops give excellent support, breathability and comfort. The harness also facilitates the carrying and organizing of work tools. Combined with TOP CROLL, this seat harness is designed to be converted into a full harness.



ASPIR

ASPIR is especially designed for rental business. The movable waist-belt padding ensures comfort for users of all sizes. Like a classic harness, it is equipped with two tie-in points for greater comfort when walking or suspended. The identification and marking areas simplify management of the equipment inventory. The reinforced tie-in points and thick webbing make it very durable for intensive use.



SHAOLIN CE EN 358 / EN 813/ (EN361 WITH A TORSO)

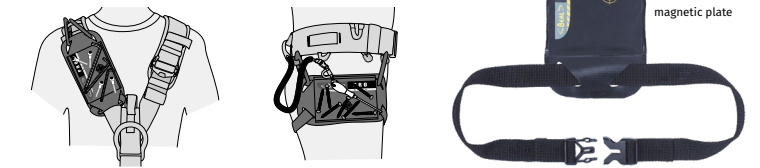
A lightweight fall arrest and work positioning harness. This harness benefits from WEB CORE technology provides exceptional levels of comfort thanks to optimal pressure distribution on hips and thighs. WEB CORE is a wide, thin and lightweight piece of webbing laser cut to the shape of the harness. This results in a more compact, lightweight and above all more comfortable harness.



Size	Weight (g)	Waist circumference (cm)	Leg loop circumference (cm)
S	700	60-100	42-60
M-L	760	72-120	52-70
XL	810	85-140	57-75

ATTRAC'TOOL

A magnetic plate that allows you to temporarily attach a leash secured tool to an appropriate metal surface.



TOOL BELT

A waist belt with small gear loops for use with the TOOL BUCKET, LONG TOOL BUCKET, GLASS BUCKET, AIR LEASH and ATTRAC'TOOL.

Webbing gear loops positioned around the belt allow the tools to be secured where convenient. The belt is reinforced to help spread out the weight of the tools on the waist.



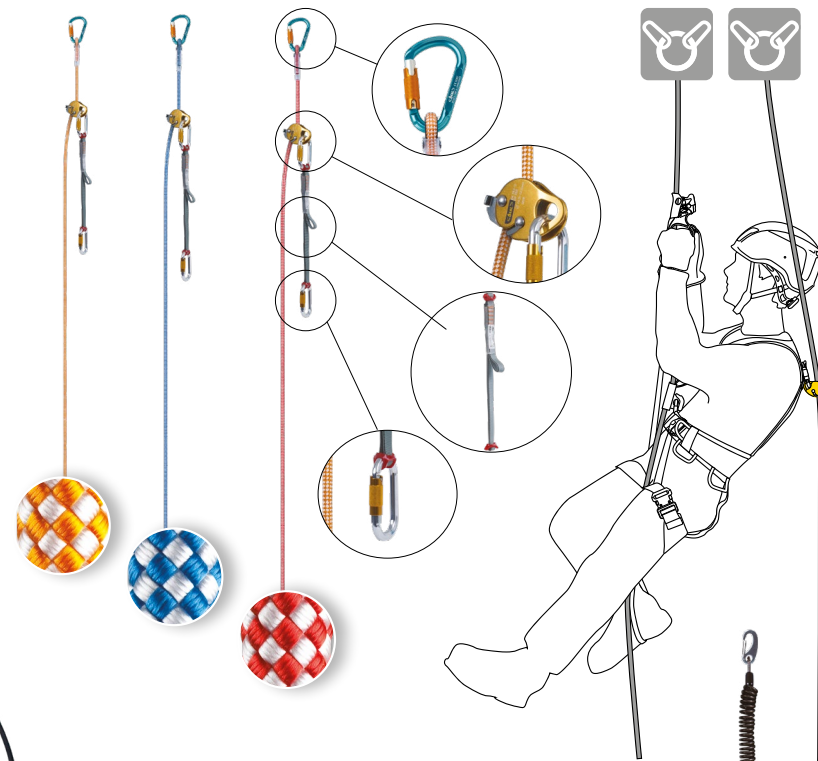
PRO SOLUTIONS

AIR-KIT 11 MM

Specific kit to create a mobile fall arrest system especially adapted to vertical work or work on inclined surfaces.

Kit includes:

- » A MONITOR mobile fall arrest device.
- » A MOBILE-LANYARD with 2 positions: 20 cm and 40 cm.
- » 2 O'LIGHT 3-MATIC connectors to attach the lanyard to both the MONITOR and the harness.
- » Connectors: two O'LIGHT 3-MATIC and one BE LOCK 3-MATIC.
- » A length of rope 10 m / 15 m / 20 m / 30 m / 50 m / 60 m with a 11 mm diameter with sewn termination protected by a reinforced eye.
- » 1 BE-LOCK 3-MATIC connector to attach the rope to the anchor point.



GENIUS TOOL BUCKET

A rigid 20 litre bucket for power tools such as a hammer drill, electric screwdriver or angle grinder; constructed with a clever 'twist and fold' function to reduce size for storage. Small gear loops on the outside and inside edges of the bag can be used to attach small CLIC CLAC pockets (TOOL BUCKET, GLASS BUCKET, LONG TOOL BUCKET) to organise your work station as you wish.



AIR LEASH

An extendable gear loop allowing tools to remain attached whilst in use.



SUPER LEASH

A webbing based extendable gear loop allowing tools to remain attached whilst in use.



ORIENT EXPRESS

A webbing based extendable gear loop allowing tools to remain attached whilst in use.

Keylock system.

- » Ergonomic faceted ring, easy to handle and unlock.
- » Quick lock and unlock.
- » Ability to unlock with a 7 mm long opening Maillon if blocked.



Unidirectional screw locking karabiner designed for use with belay plates where the ropes pass through the karabiner. Thanks to the internal snap gate that clips onto a harness belay loop, the karabiner cannot be inverted. This ensures the correct orientation of the karabiner and reduces the risk of the belay system being weakened through cross loading.

BIRDIE

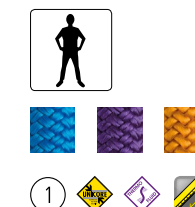
Compact belay device with assisted braking for lead climbing or top rope. All metal construction, with cam and friction components in stainless steel for great durability. The rope exits following the device's axis, to avoid twisting. The BIRDIE can be used with all dynamic single ropes from 8.5 mm to 10,5 mm.



Colours : Blue (B), Green (G), Orange (O)

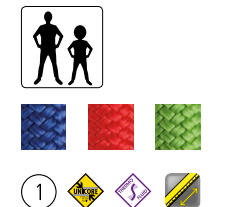
WALL MASTER 10,5 MM

GROUP – INTENSIVE USE
Durability for intensive use



WALL SCHOOL 10,2 MM

GROUP – REGULAR USE
Durability and easy handling





STAR-BELAY TYPES AUTO BELAY

STAR-belay device types are a spin-off a range of 20 devices comprising fall arrest blocks, recovery devices, automatic descenders, evacuation and rescue devices, load arrestors, etc. All our product-concepts are manufactured in the Netherlands! The STAR-belay devices are spe-

cially designed for sport and recreational climbers in climbing gyms, rope courses, adventure parks, etc. all over the world and comprises 3 types of auto belay.



CWD9

up to 9 meters (29.5 ft) descent height – such as Clip 'n Climb & Fun Climb



CWD16

up to 16 meters (52.5 ft) high objects – sport & recreational climbing



CWD20 SPEED

max. descent height 20 meters (65.6 ft) – speed climbing (5 m/s!)

STAR-BELAY – SHEATH CORE

We've put over 70-years safety engineering experience in our STAR®-series auto belay!

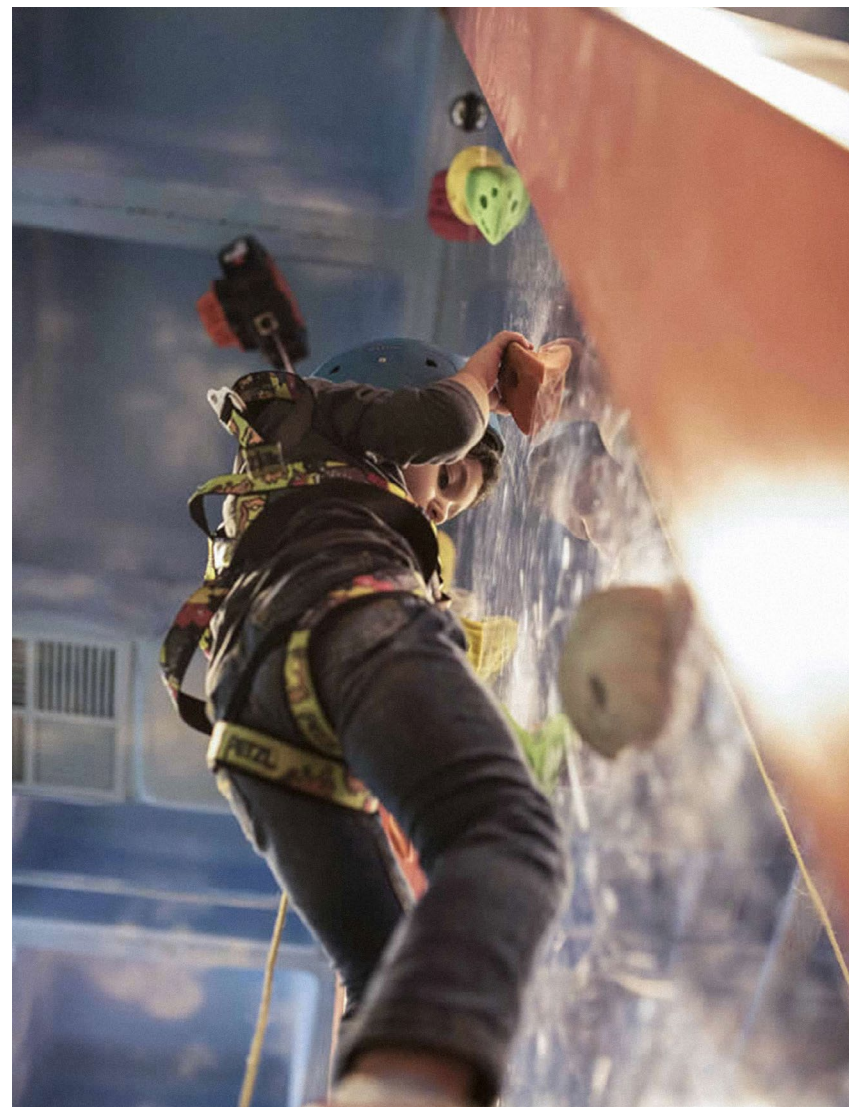
Founded in 1948, HONOR Safety & Consultancy is an international orientated Dutch company experienced developing and manufacturing premium height safety, evacuation and rescue solutions. With this as our basis we've also developed STAR®-belay devices under the trade name HONOR AdventureTech. Although climbing differs from industrial height safety the circumstances are very much the same: risk of falling and safe descent to where you came from!

Auto belays contribute to the safety of climbers while enjoying the freedom and fun of their sport or hobby. Whether seriously training, staying in shape or experiencing to climb up or descend a very first time you're free to go on any facility in a safe way. HONOR AdventureTech auto belay facilitate individual climbers up to large groups while costs are lowered.

Enjoy your Safety high-up!

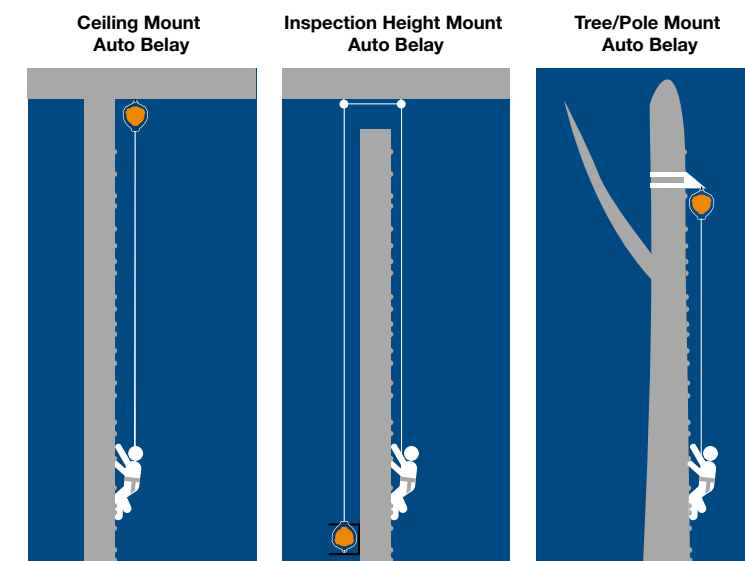
BECOMING A HONOR ADVENTURETECH DISTRIBUTOR?

The brand STAR-belay is expanding rapidly. Interested becoming a selective distributor of these premium devices (more to come!) in your region? Please send us an e-mail to: info@honor-safety.com



MANY GOOD REASONS TO CHOOSE FOR HONOR STAR-BELAYS!

- » Sheath core (kernmantel) climbing ropes, that's what climbers want!
- » No free-fall distance due to always activated modular Centrifugal Brake! Assures very low fall arrest forces on the body and descends the climber automatically, smoothly and safe to the ground! (EN 341:2011/1A approved).
- » Real PPE because approved according EN 360:2002 (Retractable type fall arrestors)!
- » Non-resettable 'length or distance of use' Counter.
- » Largest climbers weight range and tallest height range in the World.
- » Most lightweight Auto Belay devices.
- » Handle-Mount or Top-Eye.
- » Easy to install and relocated.
- » Can be top-mounted but it's easier on ergonomic inspection heights just above the floor by special Device Mounting Bracket for periodically inspections!
- » Very low examination & inspection costs.
- » Lowest total-costs-of-ownership!



MOUNTING EXAMPLES

- I) Ceiling Mount (Lifeline Exit pointed down, by carabiner or special Mounting Bracket on Anchor Point)
- II) Inspection Height Mount (floor level - Lifeline Exit pointed up using a special Mounting Bracket. Lifeline lead over a pulley-block(s) mounted on top of the climbing wall - extended rope length on device)
- III) Tree/Pole Mount (Lifeline Exit pointed down, by carabiner or special Mounting Bracket on Anchor Point)



NINJA TIMER

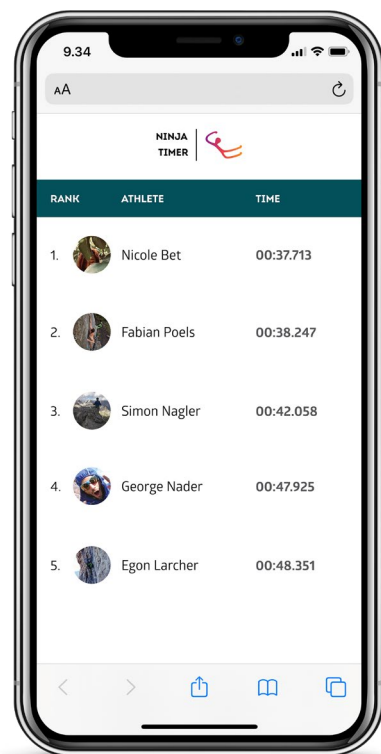
THE FIRST INTERACTIVE, CABLE-LESS TIMING SYSTEM DESIGNED FOR CLIMBING

If you are looking for an affordable and highly mobile way to put on speed competitions, speed training, and other fun timed challenges and events, look no further. The Ninja Timer brings more engagement and excitement to your gym.

The Ninja Timer is ready to meet the demand, be it your speed lanes, park-ours/ninja courses, kids' birthday games, or just about any other timed event or challenge you're looking to set up.

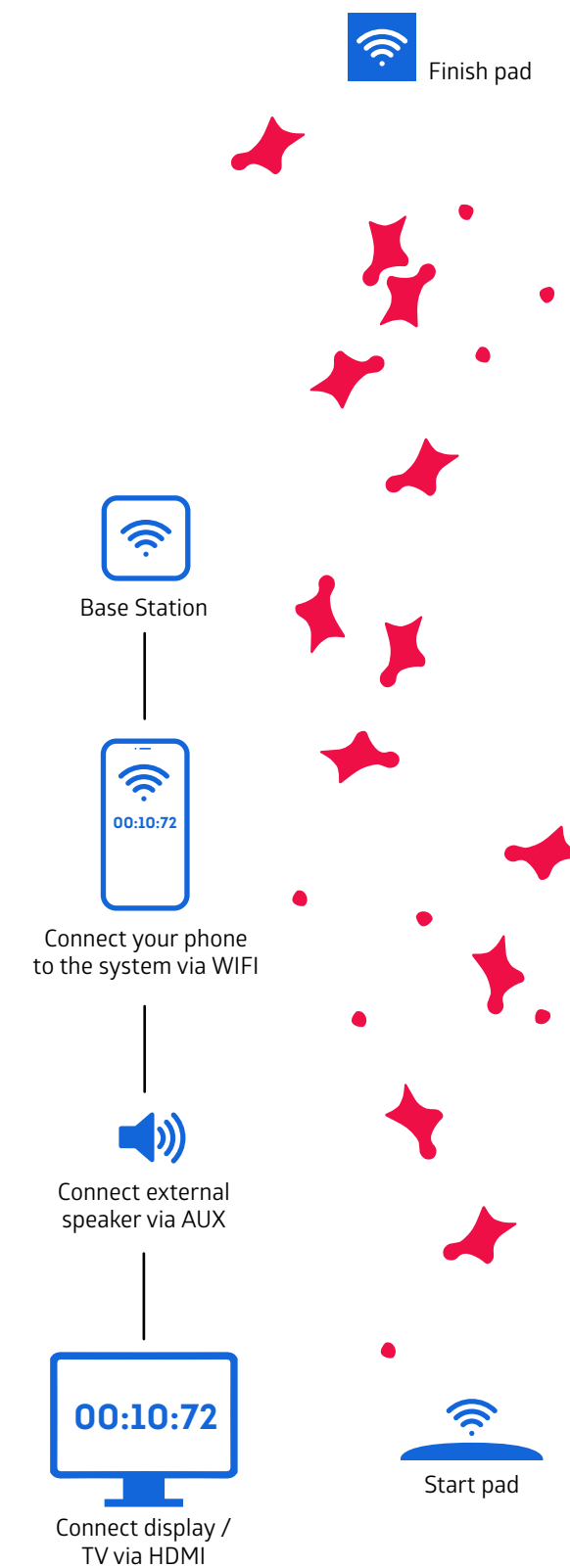
EFFICIENT TRAINING AND COMPETITIONS:

- » Coaches can set up speed sessions and monitor performances
- » Measures time to one-hundredth of a second and athletes' reaction time
- » IFSC compliant audio cue
- » Easy implementation of competitions & rankings



SIMPLE SETUP & OPERATION:

- » Portable, cable-less setup: assemble and disassemble in just a few minutes
- » Control via any smartphone, tablet or laptop
- » WIFI enabled, wireless timing system





www.KeepU.info

GIGAKLICK

The Gigaklick is a globally unique TÜV-certified backup system, that can simplify course and hall operations to a certain extent.

The Gigaklick is an additional belay device for top rope climbing which has been designed to provide more safety, especially for beginners and children's classes. Our goal is to provide beginners and children with an environment for "safe-learning", where mistakes do not necessarily lead to unpleasant consequences. Nevertheless, all standard conditions remain the same (belaying, partner check, friction, weight difference of climbing partner, etc.).

If the belay device is used properly, neither climber nor belayer will notice any difference. The Gigaklick slows down and blocks the climber only at dangerously high speeds. This avoids accidents with ground impact and increases safety – the ideal solution for your top rope area!



WE KEEP U SAFE

HOW TO IMPROVE THE SAFETY IN TOPROPE CLIMBING

Long before climbing reached the weatherproof climbing walls of Europe's towns and cities, it was already a popular alpine sport. Perhaps this is one reason why climbing is a permanent element of the sports curriculum in South Tyrolean schools.

Parallel to the climbing activities, thousands of school children also descend upon the climbing halls of the South Tyrol, where they, of course, learn belaying and climbing. Safety is, naturally, the top priority and belaying errors must consistently be eradicated.

The Gigaklick was developed due to the increased demands for higher safety measures, and this can now be found in all major South Tyrolean climbing establishments.

The Gigaklick is also becoming very popular far beyond the South Tyrolean border.

For the most unique back-up safety system of its type worldwide, we won the ISPO AWARD 2019.



Team KeepU: Bernhard Kofler, a locksmith and metalworker who invented the Gigaklick and Andrea Meßner, a sport science and physical education student who works as a climbing instructor in the climbing gym Vertikale Brixen.

More Details

The Gigaklick slows down the climber dynamically from 14 to 120 kg with a rope diameter of 9.5-10.2 cm.

Conventional belay devices may be used incorrectly or be defective. The security feature of the Gigaklick cannot be overridden.

The Gigaklick is the first and only top rope belay device with a backup function which compensates for belaying errors and, therefore, helps prevent accidents from happening.

The Gigaklick does not change climbing in any way. If the belay device is correctly used, then neither climber nor belayer will notice any difference.

The Gigaklick is delivered with a custom-made mounting bracket, making it easier for the climbing halls to be modified.



STATIC AIR
FINE DUST FREE

A FINE DUST FREE CLIMBING ENVIRONMENT

STATAIR PROVIDES A CLEAN AIR FOR YOUR CLIMBERS!

StaticAir produces fine dust reduction systems that effectively capture (ultra-)fine chalk particles. Ensuring a clean air in your climbing environment will lead to a healthier and more comfortable climbing experience for all climbers!

The Pamares and PMX fine dust reduction systems will help you to take a deep breath and to get the most out of your climbing experience. Achieve better performances and experience more joy without damaging your respiratory system.



"THE AIR QUALITY IN OUR CLIMBING GYM HAS GREATLY IMPROVED BY THE SYSTEMS OF STATAIR."

Escaladrome
Germany

"WE'RE CONTINUALLY LOOKING FOR BETTER SOLUTIONS TO A PROBLEM THAT PLAGUES OUR INDUSTRY: CHALK DUST IN THE AIR. WE'RE TREMENDOUSLY EXCITED ABOUT STATAIR'S PRODUCTS. THEY'RE HIGHLY ENERGY EFFICIENT, SILENT, AND STYLISH."

Seattle Bouldering Project
United States

HOW IT WORKS

The Pamares and PMX can be easily mounted on the ceiling of a climbing environment. Plug the power plug of the fine dust reduction system in a power point nearby, and you are ready to clean the air!

The fine dust particles in the environment of the Pamares/PMX are given a positive charge. Due to static charge, all the charged particles will be attracted and collected on the collection frame of the Pamares/PMX.



» >50% cleaner air
» Scalable solution



» Silent
» No impact on environment



» Sustainable
» 18 watts power consumption



» Proven technology

For more information on our story, experience, products and references you can visit our website www.staticair.com. Contact us by mail via info@staticair.com to check the possibilities in your climbing environment. Also don't forget to check our Instagram to see our latest projects!



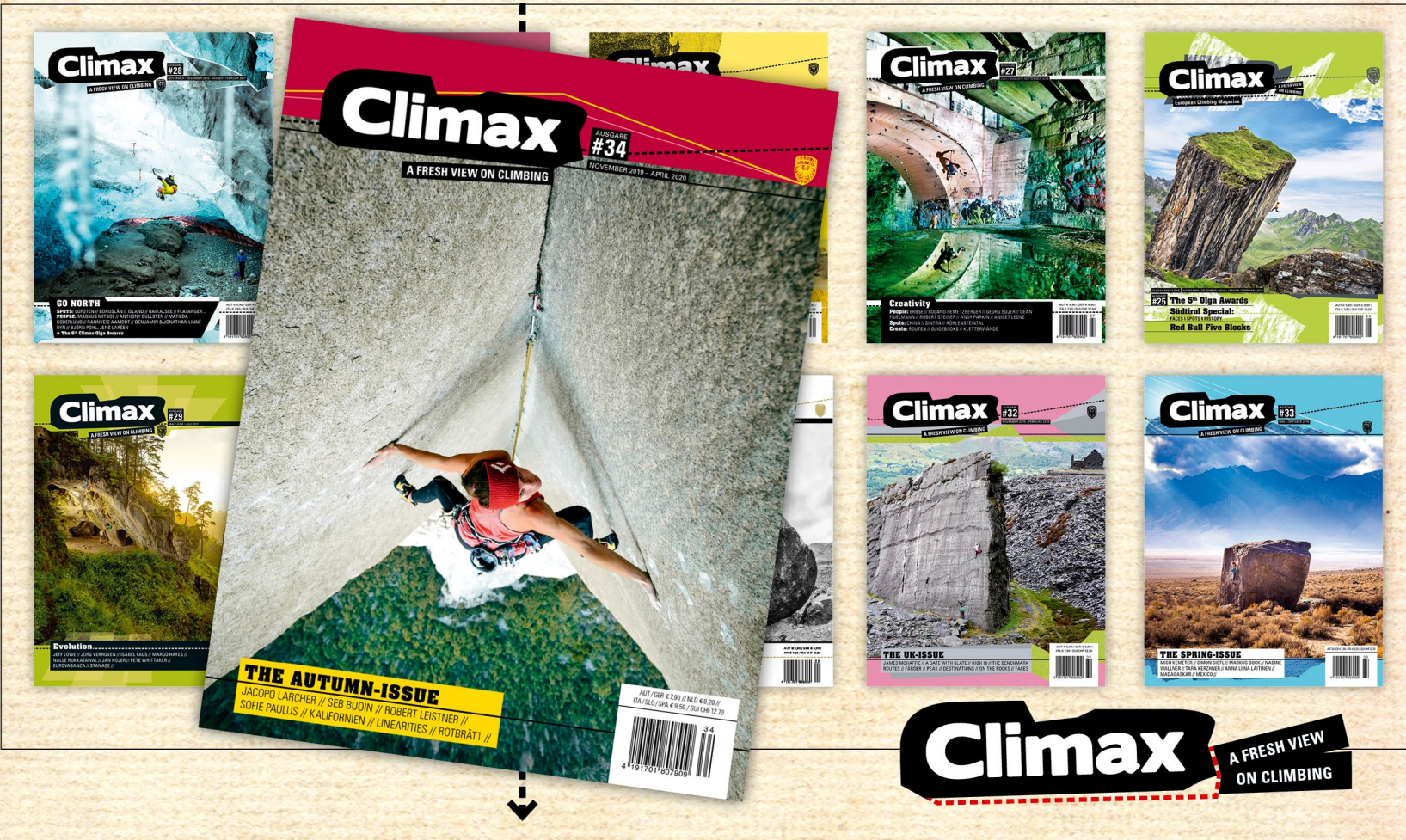
@staticair_official



PMX
Length: 225 cm
Diameter: 65cm
Weight: 50 KG



PAMARES
Length: 125 cm
Diameter: 65cm
Weight: 35 KG



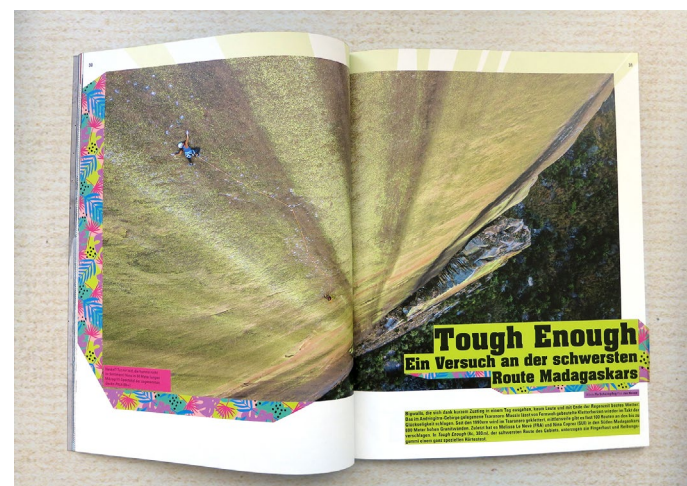
CLIMAX MAGAZINE

Capture the stories, the lifestyle & the spirit of climbing – this has been our mantra when we founded Climax Magazine in 2007. After 12 ears we are as dedicated as we've always been. Why? Because our passion for climbing is still burning. For us climbing is not just about numbers and records. It's about the adventures & experiences that we climbers share. Its about community, culture and spirit be it indoor or outdoor. We focus on high-quality storytelling and state-of-the-art pictures in a magazine-format second to none.

Climax – the magazine from climbers for climbers.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Climax Magazine is published bi-annually with 144 eco-friendly printed pages in a stunning 240x300mm format. We are available in gyms and in well-sorted magazine-trade.





NEW CHALK FORMULA

8C + is renewed, transformed and creates a new era of products, a distinct and different image. We have been working very hard to offer our customers the best chalk for the climbing community. A value-added

product that takes care of their own and their environment. A value proposition that brings something unique to the market. Quality, excellence and respect.

QUALITY CHALK

Since our inception, 8c + has always been sensitive to the climbing community, from within, from practice and emotion. Our mission has always been quality in each and every one of its phases, from the raw material to the final product. Thus, as a result of our efforts, we have obtained the quality certificates that support us.



GYM FAVORITES

Our new formula has brought us liquid chalk **without rosin**, especially suitable for gyms since it is soluble with water and prevents damage to the hold. We also have barrels of 60L and 120L of powder and crunchy chalk.



POWDER CHALK

With our new formula for expert climbers, we've improved the granulometry, the humidity (to make the product more stable) and the manufacturing process. All this improvements is to increase the grip and reduce the friction on the hands.



CRUNCHY CHALK

Our new formula for expert climbers also applies to the crunchy chalk, it has a easy dispensing in the hand and helps to avoid environmental pollution in indoor climbing gyms.



BLOCKS AND BALLS

We've compacted the new formula in blocks and balls. The block contain 12 portions of our powder chalk condensed at low density. The chalk balls have different size presentations, it's powder chalk condensed at low density in a porous gauze. Both products have an easy dosing and avoid ambiental pollution.



LIQUID CHALK AND GEL

With the new formula for expert climbers came new liquid chalk. It maintains the classic qualities of the liquid chalk with rosin, a good adhesion to hands and a quick drying. The chalk in gel has glycerin to take care of the hands and prevent the product from dryin out. All liquid chalk formats are also available **without rosin**.



CLIMBING TAPE

Protect your fingers with our sticky climbing tape, also available in colors. Our white climbing tapes are 100% cotton and are approved for sanitary use. (class 1)



CHALK BAGS

Bags of exclusive design. Made in unique fabrics, include the belt. Embroidered logo. Boulder chalk bags and the chalk bags are available in different models and colors.



VERTICAL EQUIPMENT AND GYM CONSULTING

With the legacy and knowledge from over 50 years of family business in climbing sports, benky climbing develops and produces products for the climbing- and boulder gym industry.

We supply everything to run a professional boulder- and climbing gym. Boulderwall design, development and construction. Bouldering mats. Carpet & PVC in highest EN standards. Climbing holds and volumes of major brands. Gymcare line for the maintenance of climbing holds and rental shoes. Long lasting steel express slings for climbing gyms. Distribution of bouldering essentials like chalk, tape and brushes.

STEEL SLING
PE-Covered Steelsling. Longlasting and noise reducing through PE-Cover. 22KN



GYMBIN STEEL CARABINER
Removable pin with anti-twist technology. 30KN



GRIPWASH
Purification process especially developed for climbing holds. Removes completely all dirt like rubber, chalk, perspiration, grease, oil fast and efficient. Activates the specific texture of modern climbing holds. Clean up to 1200 holds in one hour. Available as Gripwash Classic and Concentrate. Certified products from german production.



SKUNK X
The hygiene pump spray is particularly suitable for climbing hire shoes. It can also be used for mattresses, pads and carpets. Suitable for all surfaces – also textiles – that can be treated damp, except for alcohol-sensitive materials like acrylic glass. Spray on the hygiene spray, allow to take effect for one minute and let dry.



ROPELESS THE BRAND

We spend our days strolling through the woods searching for boulders. Driven by this passion for bouldering, ROPELESS was born quite simply by the curiosity of friends and entrepreneurs brought together by the sport. We made it our mission to bring well designed and sustainable equipment to the market.



ROPELESS CHALK

THE FIRST COMPLETE 100% PLASTIC FREE PACKAGING LINE FOR CLIMBING CHALK. Premium dry rock climbing chalk which keeps your hands ultra dry and sticky. Made from 100% pure Magnesium Carbonate. Available as: Chunky chalk 9 oz. (255 g) Bloc chalk 8 Blocks / 2oz. (57 g) Chalk balls 2 oz. (57 g).

ROPELESS TAPE

Ropeless 100% pure cotton tape is available in two different sizes (2,5 cm / 3,8 cm width) and five fresh colours. Every roll comes in a neat reusable tinplate jar embossed with a unique hand-drawn illustrations.



Keep the rocks clean... and celebrate your ascent.

ROPELESS BRUSH

The cheers brush is not just another boulder-brush. It's made from highest quality material. Made in Germany.
» Wooden brush handle
» Natural boar-hair bristle
» Metal logo bottle opener
» Cheers iron branding





Here we could now have a lot of praise and BlaBla about goodgrip, but we prefer to keep it as with our brushes - little frills, but meaningful: Social, fair, environmentally friendly, customer-oriented and efficient – done.

STICKBRUSHES

INDOOR PRO

Our IndoorPro series has been specially developed for commercial bouldering halls and their requirements, from cleaning poles and brushes to wall hooks.

OUTDOOR PRO

Not a plastic toy, but solid aluminum. Extendable up to 2.2m length you can reach every hold. All our brushes (also custombrushes) can be attached effortlessly and for posterity there is the suitable adapter for your Actioncam.



CUSTOM-SERIES

Your own range of brushes, chalk (solid or liquid), tape and skinshapers. Together with you we develop a design, produce and deliver your own custom series.



HANDMADE IN GERMANY

BOULDER BRUSHES

It all started with these boulder brushes. Handmade from workshops for the blind and handicapped in Germany. All bristles pulled in by hand and interlaced on the back with a stainless steel wire. In two bristle hardnesses and three different sizes, vegan or non-vegan, there is the perfect brush for everyone.



ROUTESETTING

We developed the little parts of routesetting - the Ringo's! Our next step; The biggest stock on bits.

Actually, we having all standard bits for the european and amar-ican climbing market in different lengthes.

For exemple:

TX20, TX25, HEX 8, HEX 6m, HEX 7/16", HEX 5/16", SQ2





JUST4RENT BLOC

is a dedicated rental shoe made to offer a higher performance alternative to conventional rental shoes. The tough knitted textile upper allows the shoe to be washed to keep them fresh. With an asymmetric last shape and highly durable rubber, Just4Rent Bloc is the ideal bouldering gym rental shoe for increased performance.



JUST4RENT VENT

is a rental shoe built to withstand the demands of repeated indoor use. The upper is constructed from fully washable, tough and breathable knitted textile making it easy to keep them fresh and hygienic. Our unique IRS construction combines the rand and sole as a single piece of rubber, eliminating delamination and placing 6mm of durable rubber in the high wear zone at the toe.

JUST4RENT

is a comfortable rental shoe with a relaxed last shape. The generous sizing helps ease beginners into their first climbing shoe experience. Hook and loop straps make them fast and easy to put on. As with all models of the Just4Rent family, features include a highly durable one-piece rand and sole with hardwearing rubber; an easy to see sizing label; and press stud attachment for speedy pairing together.



JUST4RENT LACE

is a durable rental shoe with lace closure for a more adjustable fit. The high quality leather upper is tough and breathable, with a relaxed comfort fit. The one piece rand and sole in hard-wearing rubber ensures longevity, meaning Just4Rent Lace is the ideal gym rental choice.

BOREAL JUST4RENT FAMILY

BOREAL have been leading the way in climbing and mountaineering footwear since 1975. For over 40 years, the family run company has designed, manufactured, tested and developed the products in-house in Villena, Spain, allowing the brand to remain at the forefront of innovation.

From the first use of "sticky" rubber on climbing shoes back in 1979 to the development of the unsurpassed Zenith® compound; from the pioneering use of waterproof membranes in mountaineering boots to the unique Dry-Line® system; BOREAL continues to set new standards.

BOREAL has applied their knowledge and experience to help open up the world of climbing to beginners taking their first steps at indoor walls. The unique, hard-wearing rubber formulation, comfortable last shape and patented "Integrated rand system"(IRS) which provides a one-piece sole and rand, allow for a joyful climbing experience from the very start.



Size range: 35-49 EUR (full sizes only)



Comfort: Easy fitting generous last shape



Rubber mix: Extra durable and abrasion resistant



Pull strap 1: Size marked on strap



Pull strap 2: Button to join the pair

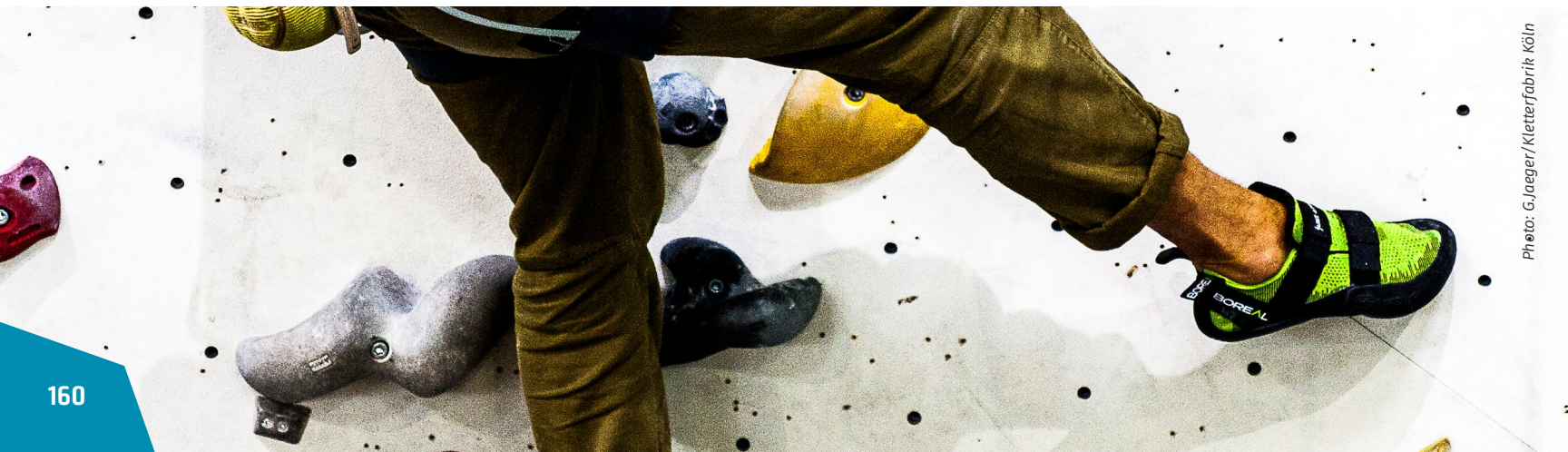


Photo: G. Jaeger/Kletterfabrik Köln

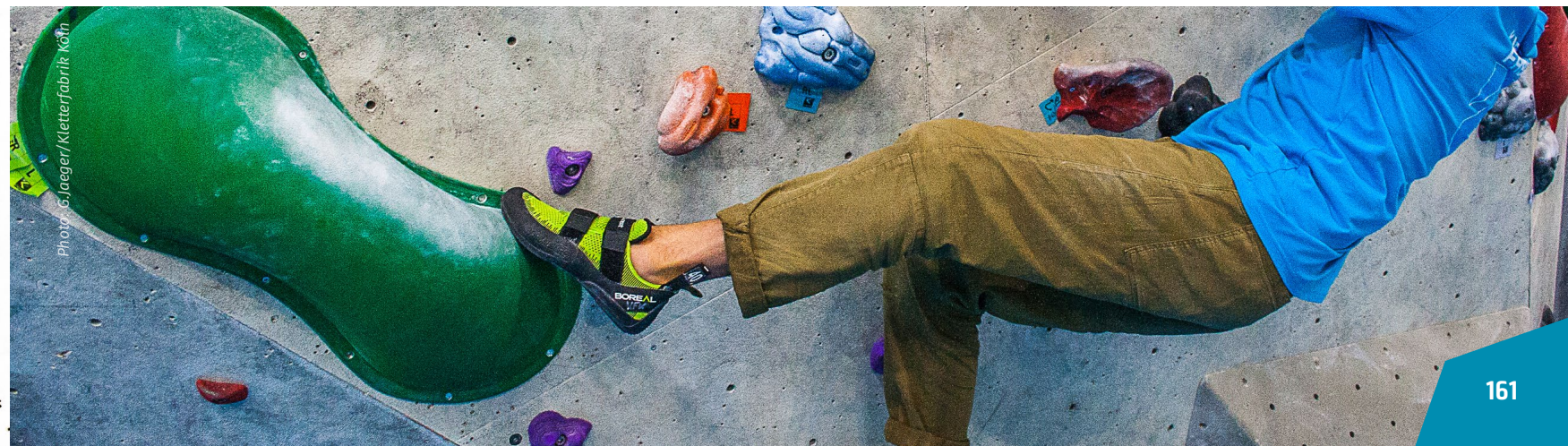


Photo: G. Jaeger/Kletterfabrik Köln



CLIMBING IS OUR PASSION
FAMILY OWNED. CLIMBER OPERATED.



LIFEGUARD

The Lifeguard belay device with assisted braking is compact, light and durable. Our new device has been constructed using hot forged aircraft grade aluminum and stainless steel for increased durability. The Lifeguard can be used with classic belaying techniques with single ropes ranging from 8.9mm to 11mm for lead and top-rope climbing.



SAFEGUARD (SPRINGLESS)

By constructing the Lifeguard without the internal spring, the Safeguard is a great tool for rescue and rigging work. It will lock onto the rope with very little force giving you the confidence that once the position of the rope is set the device will not creep or slide.



ORBIT HARNESS

The Orbit is our all webbing, highly adjustable climbing seat harness. Comes with standard auto-locking buckles and a gear loop. Unlike our former Galaxy harness, the Orbit comes with a belay loop for lead belaying and top roping. This is the ideal harness for rental programs, guides or a spare harness for your friends when you are headed out climbing in a group.

Weight: 380 g
Size: One Size Fits Most

Best Rental Shoe. Period.



BADGER

The 3D molded toe cap eliminates the seam where de-lamination can occur, while providing an extra layer of protection for durability. The sticky grey rubber also helps to prevent marks on climbing surfaces. The Badger is constructed with premium leather for the upper and the footbed which reduces the odor found in synthetic rental shoes.



RHINO

The sticky grey rubber also helps to prevent marks on climbing surfaces. The Rhino is constructed with premium leather for the upper and hemp footbed which reduces the odor found in synthetic rental shoes. The 3D molded toe box and heel cup eliminates the seam where de-lamination can occur, while providing an extra layer of protection for durability.



MAD BADGER

Rental shoes for kids! The 3D molded toe cap eliminates the seam where de-lamination can occur, while providing an extra layer of protection for durability. The sticky grey rubber also helps to prevent marks on climbing surfaces.



HARDWARE

Every Mad Rock biner is inspected by hand, date stamped, and half-strength tested before it hits the shelves. Our hardware is engineered with maximum functionality in mind and our attention to detail is unparalleled. Hot forging gives our biners amazing strength-to-weight ratios. Unlike other designs with hard angles and obtrusive features, our biners have smooth lines and flawless seams to ensure greater safety.

Sales@MadRockClimbing.Com



BD Athlete Chaehun Seo

BLACK DIAMOND GYM COLLECTION

At Black Diamond it's all about climbing, running and skiing. We share the same experiences that you do on rock, ice and snow and these experiences push us to make the best gear possible for our worldwide family of outdoor enthusiasts. What began in the Yosemite Valley has grown into a global company. Black Diamond stands for the spirit of the sports, their values and goals, past, present and future. Since 1957, our innovative gear designs have set standards in numerous areas. This is the result of dedication, desire and diligence on the part of an incredible team of people.

We offer a specific gym catalogue. Get your gym workbook at orders@blackdiamond.eu



BLACK GOLD LOOSE CHALK

A premium blend of our new scientifically engineered chalk, Black Gold contains 10% Pure Gold, which is a super porous form of magnesium carbonate containing Upsalite. Black Gold absorbs twice the moisture than other compounds. **Available** in 30g, 100g, 200g or 300g packs.



SKIN MAINTENANCE KIT

Everything you need to repair your fingers at the crag, and to doctor up those flappers and calluses after a hard day of cragging: A compact kit that includes your skin-care essentials including a set of nail clippers, 1 1/2" inch tape, 1 1/2" split roll tape, and sanding block.



STREET CREEK 24L PACK

Combining haulbag durability with urban functionality, the Street Creek 24 is your go-to commuter pack, perfectly suited for early morning missions to the gym, and late-night bike rides home from work. 15-inch dedicated external laptop sleeve. Front zipped pocket and internal security pocket.



CLIMBON SKIN CARE

ClimbOn is a multi-purpose, 100% plant based, food grade ingredients product that can be used for burns, cuts, scrapes, rashes, cracked cuticles and heels, tissue nose, road rash, diaper rash, abrasions, poison ivy and any skin issue that needs deep moisturizing and nourishing. Available in different forms and sizes.

PERFORMANCE FOOTWEAR

(All models available March 2020.)



CIRCUIT SHOE

Engineered for ultimate comfort, the Circuit is stylistically sharp, sticky, and ultra-durable, making for a performance lifestyle shoe that's equally at home at the gym, crag, or bar. Collapsible heel for easy use at gym or crag, BD BlackLabel-Street Rubber, comfortable knit upper. Webbing loops for various tagging options.



SESSION SHOE

Combining ultimate comfort with performance: The shoe seamlessly transitions from gym to crag and out to the city streets. Stretchy heel for easy on/off transitions. Integrated bootie wraps your foot like a sock, while the breathable knit upper regulates the temperature. Non-marking BlackLabel-Street Rubber and rubber toe protection.



TECHNICIAN SHOE

Engineered for precision, the Technician is ultralight, super sticky, and durable, making it the perfect scrambling approach shoe. Featuring a breathable upper, the Technician has superior temperature control, while remaining durable for abuse on the rocks. BlackLabel-Mountain Rubber and tuned EVA midsole for stiffness and comfort.



MISSION LT SHOE

A lightweight shoe for speed approaches in technical terrain. Designed with a sock-like, bootie fit, it slips on to provide security and comfort that lasts all day. Super sticky BlackLabel-Mountain Rubber. Triple density midsole and traditional European shape.



WOMEN'S FORGED DENIM

The Forged Denim combines best-in-class materials with climbing specific features: Thanks to its Cordura™ fiber content it is unbelievably stretchy for moving over stone. Slim, slightly tapered V11 fit for pure climbing functionality. Integrated brush pocked and unique 3-piece waistband construction to prevent waistband from stretching out.



MEN'S CREDO PANTS

Purpose-built from durable and stretch cotton twill that moves with you, the Credo Pants are ideal for long days at the crag that bleed into after-send celebrations. Two front pockets, two rear pockets and brush slot in right rear pocket. Adjustable leg openings and reinforced knees.



MEN'S FORGED DENIM

A harness-compatible low-profile denim that combines best-in-class materials with climbing specific features: Thanks to its Cordura™ fiber content it is unbelievably stretchy for moving over stone. Slim, slightly tapered V11 fit for pure climbing functionality. Integrated brush pocked.

Available in 3 different lengths.



WOMEN'S NOTION SP PANTS

Loose-fitting cotton pants perfect for gym sessions and cool days in the boulders, the Notion Pants feature a stretch waistband and cuffs and plenty of pockets for your small essentials. Reinforced knees and seat gusset allow full range of motion.



MEN'S SPIRE PANTS

Stretchy, tough-as-nails climbing pants designed for winter bouldering sessions, desert towers and brisk days chasing the red-point, the Spire Pants handle real-deal abuse dished out by real-deal climbers. Two front pockets, two rear flap security pockets and zippered thigh pocket. Integrated adjustable waistbelt and articulated knees.



MAMMUT - SWISS 1862

Mammut is a Swiss outdoor company that provides high-quality products and unique brand experiences for outdoor enthusiasts around the world. The leading international premium brand whose roots reach back to 1862 has been standing for safety and pioneering innovation for more than 155 years. Mammut products merge functionality and performance with contemporary design. With its wide range of hardware, shoes and clothing, Mammut is one of the most complete

suppliers in the outdoor market with a long history of tradition. In 1952, Mammut introduced its first twisted nylon yarn glacier rope, the Mammut Argenta. 12 years later the Mammut Dynamic was the first single rope to be certified by the international mountaineering organization, the UIAA.



SENDER HARNESS

The new unisex Sender harness is the lightest Mammut climbing harness in the Spring / Summer 2020 collection. Since the focus lies on performance, it comes with a narrower cut. The Laser Cut technology provides a stylish look as well as good breathability in the regular or Fast Adjust version. The new Sender Chalk Bags are optically perfectly adapted to color and technology, are made of material remnants and are therefore particularly sustainable.

- » Unisex design
- » Laser-cut fabric for breathability and robustness
- » 2 large pre-shaped gear loops for easy attachment and 2 lightweight gear loops
- » Strong haul loop (2 kN)

Sizes: XS - XL
Weight: 320 g



SMART 2.0

The Smart 2.0 is the new and improved version of Mammut's tried-and-tested Smart belay device. Weighing just 80 grams, the lightweight Smart 2.0 is easy to use, has no moving parts or levers and offers a significantly improved braking effect. It functions according to the tube principle and is therefore suitable for lead and top rope climbing. In the case of a fall it brakes faster - the newly developed braking insert locks the climbing rope completely.

Weight: 80 g
Colors: galaxy, dark ultramarine, phantom, silver, dark orange



10.1 GYM STATION CLASSIC

Mammut designed the extremely durable rope for intensive gym use. The special braided core construction of the 10.1 Gym Rope minimizes sheath slippage, especially when used as a top rope. Gym operators also appreciate its durability in the daily operation of climbing gyms. The 10.1 Gym Ropes come in specific lengths for gym use.

Length: 40 / 50 / 150 / 300 m
UIAA-falls (single rope 80 kg): 7-8
Weight / m: 67 g
Impact force: 8.1 kN



SEON CARGO

Work to climb with the Seon Cargo! The Seon daypack series combines working life and leisure time. The «Work» compartment is designed to organize all essential office items, such as laptop, tablet and documents, while the «Climb» section stores climbing equipment. From a portable office to leisure fun. With a capacity of 35 liters the Seon Cargo is ideal for short trips and its robust design makes it an ageless companion on daily commutes.

Weight: 650 g
Colors: black, granit



SENDER LIQUID CHALK

Mammut Pro Team athlete Jakob Schubert swears by it: The Liquid Chalk Sender uses an innovative formula of liquid magnesium that dries out the skin faster and keeps it dry for longer. The liquid magnesium guarantees a firm grip in those climbing or bouldering moments when an extra friction is needed and was specially developed for use in climbing gyms.



Iva Vejmolová, Flatanger, Norway. Rock Empire Ambassador

ROCK EMPIRE. READY TO CLIMB!

ROCK EMPIRE started as an idea by two climbers, who were making harnesses and other climbing equipment from everyday materials like car seat belts and fire hoses in their garages. The demand for their equipment grew and the times and government changed enough that they were able to start a firm in 1994, which is now known as ROCK EMPIRE.

Today, you will find our products in more than 50 countries, and we continue to offer high quality equipment.

That is why we involve our existing customers in the design process and offer several promises to our customers:

- » Safety First and Foremost
- » Maximum Functionality
- » High Level of Comfort
- » And, of course, we adhere to the strictest standards and EU certifications.

Over time, our product range has changed and expanded, so you can get complete equipment for sports and professional needs for a range of activities at heights.

All our products are designed to make your next climb or outdoor experience safer, more comfortable and one to remember. Ready to Climb



BEETLE BAG

A simple, durable backpack for rock and sport climbers, which is the ideal compromise between a robust pull bag and rock bag. It offers a completely removable back piece, which is always on the top of the backpack during use, so it will prevent your clothes from getting dusty. At first glance, it looks like a compact bag but it has capacity for an 80 to 100m rope plus a generous amount of climbing equipment. The outer pocket in the lid has a removable seat made of pleasant PE foam. And, of course, the backpack straps are well padded and comfortable. Thanks to a stable construction and a large opening, the rope can be used directly from the backpack. Just drag and drop the rope straight in.

1B SLIGHT

1B SLIGHT is designed for pure sport climbing. Thanks to its low weight (259 g) and fixed leg loops, it offers maximum comfort and incomparable freedom of movement. You will not even notice that you are wearing this harness.

One quick AL buckle on the waist helps quickly and safely adjust it to your size. It has four gear loops and removable back elastic straps. Maximum distribution of fall load throughout the harness.

- » 1 Quick aluminium (AL 7075) buckle – 16 mm.
- » Innovative ergonomic waist and legs straps.
- » 4 Asymmetric gear loops (5 kg).
- » Light weight belay loop in a contrasting colour (width 12 mm, 15 kN)



STREAK RENTAL

Streak Rental is a robust and durable harness for use on indoor climbing walls and as a rental. Design is based on popular Streak harness including the fully adjustable and moveable strap on the waist. Compared to the Streak, it has a better, stronger solution for the belay loop and lower tie in loop, which greatly reduces the risk of tying in improperly. If the gear loop is accidentally used as the belay loop and a fall occurs, it will not rip - keeping the climber from falling to the ground.

- » Reinforced gear loop
- » Clear durable pictograms on the outside of the waistbelt - illustrated methodical pictures how to attach and secure
- » Waist belt includes a small window where bar and QR codes are visible and scannable to speed up tracking and inspections during rental use
- » Durable belay loop
- » Available in two sizes



SIZE: S-XL

Size: XS-M



3B AKATTA

3B Akatta is a fully-adjustable and comfortable sport climbing harness and will definitely exceed your demanding requirements on the rocks as well as in the mountains. 3B Akatta has lightweight padded construction. Breathable padding includes small holes in the foam padding on the waist and legs. Distribution of the force is transmitted around the waist with 4 straps, around the legs with 3 straps. This harness offers maximum comfort and freedom of movement. Optimal distribution of fall load throughout the harness.

- » 3 aluminum QB buckles
- » 4 gear loops (max. 5kg)
- » Haul loop (max. 50kg)
- » 2 slots for carrying tools
- » Durable belay loop





ULTRA CLEAN HOLDS

CLIMBLAB

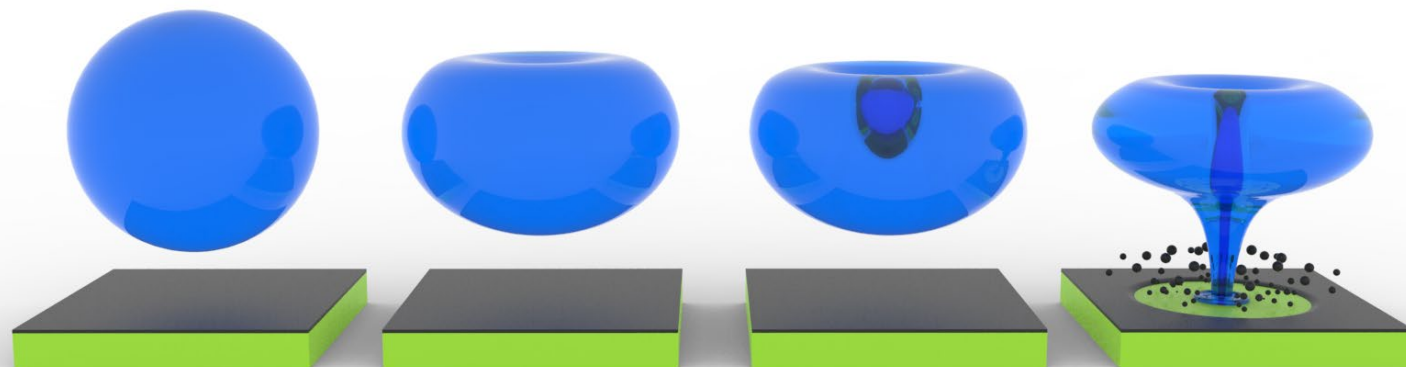
ClimbLab is a Scandinavian company founded by passionate climbers and engineers Morten Pedersen and Jens Gad. We bring new technologies and a new mind-set from careers in industrial production and world class process systems, to analyze and optimize the experience and workflow in climbing gyms.

The first system from ClimbLab optimizes cleaning and management of climbing holds. We have worked with ultrasonic cleaning in the past 10 years and hold patents within the area. ClimbLab was founded when we got a break-through in developing a custom ultrasonic machine and a custom ultrasonic soap, that magically made our old holds ultra clean.

ULTRASONIC CLEANING OF HOLDS

Conventional cleaning of climbing holds requires chemistry or pressure washing. Typical acid-based climb-soaps cannot remove the rubber completely. Use of a pressure washer is labour-intensive, and huge amounts of water is wasted. With current solutions it's impossible to clean climbing holds perfectly inside the pores on the surface.

Ultrasound cavitation enables gentle and efficient deep cleaning of porous surfaces and complex geometries and is the ultimate solution for cleaning climbing holds. In this process, climbing holds are immersed into a water-soap dilution and the machine does the hard work. During the labour-free process, billions of small cavitation bubbles implode and create micro-jets in all directions on all surfaces which will clean off any type of impurity. Subsequent water rinsing of holds is recommended to remove soap residue.



Formation and implosion of gas bubbles lead to high pressure water jets shooting impurities of object surfaces.

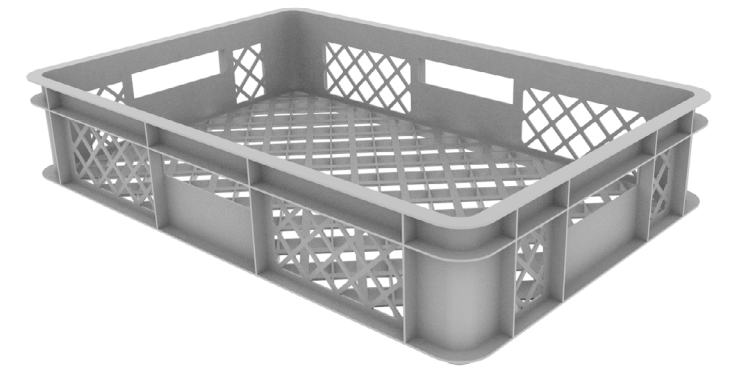
ULTRAGRIP SOAP

UltraGrip soap is co-developed with chemists from Technical University of Denmark. The soap removes all impurities, is bio-degradable and long-lasting. 6 liters in 140 liters of water will clean 40 full crates or 2000 holds in average.



PLASTIC CRATES

Our solution is optimized for standard Euro crates 400 x 600 mm. Material hardness and openness of the crates is crucial for the cleaning process. We supply crates, trolleys and storage systems at competitive prices.



ULTRASONIC CLEANING MACHINE

Optimized high power 3D ultrasound transducers ensures thorough cleaning of several full plastic crates in one automated cleaning cycle. Ergonomic design and user-friendly workflow has been optimized in collaboration with lead route setters.

- » One minute manual work per wash cycle
- » Capacity of five crates in one wash (up to 500 small holds)
- » Machine fits 90% of fiberglass macros
- » Average machine time is five minutes for one full crate
- » Handle full crates, not single holds
- » Robust machine, no moving parts
- » Convenient as a dishwasher, anyone can do it!
- » Your holds will look brand new every time you set



BETTER CLEANING »»» LESS WATER »»» LESS SOAP »»» FEWER HOURS CLEANING »»» BETTER WORKING ENVIRONMENT



GOOD REASONS - SUSTAINABLE CLEANING

ROCKETEC cleaners and washing machines are designed according to the ECO concept and allow easy and quick cleaning of climbing grips. The concept is consistently oriented towards social, ecological and economic requirements and offers solutions according to modern standards.

Automatic cleaning processes, minimal use of our biodegradable cleaner and the flexibility of the mobile system relieve people, protect the environment and reduce operating costs.



ECOLOGIC

- » Low energy and resource consumption
- » Ecological, biodegradable water-based cleaner
- » Reduction of waste, shipping and consumers costs



ECONOMIC

- » Automatic, fast & efficient washing
- » Robust & durable machines
- » Low running costs for work, water, energy and cleaner



SOCIAL

- » Simple, comfortable, ergonomic, flexible and safe washing
- » Cleaning always in one operation, no further steps for rinsing etc.
- » Satisfaction and motivation in the Team



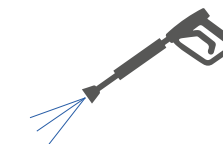
CLEANER

ROCKETEC ECO CLEANERS

The two environmentally friendly ROCKETEC high-performance concentrates "MULTI" and "SPRAY" were specially designed and developed for the cleaning of climbing holds. They clean the elements gently and quickly.

MULTI CLEANER - ideal for all washing processes

- » eco-friendly and highly efficient
- » dosage of 2-5% in ROCKETEC ECO washing machines
- » temporary surface and corrosion protection for bushings and screws
- » energy-saving due to low washing temperatures from 45°C
- » not subject to label (danger notes) according to GHS
- » cleaning in one operation



SPRAY CLEANER – special for high-pressure cleaning

- » extra strong for heaviest dirt
- » minimum consumption
- » water-saving and highly efficient in the pre-spraying process
- » cleaning in one operation



MASHINE

ROCKETEC WASHING MASHINES

The washing machines are specially designed for quick and gentle cleaning of climbing holds. They are industry standard: robust, high-quality and durable technology. ROCKETEC is a one-time investment in a sustainable washing technology.



WASHING MASHINES ECO WA 2800, 4800 & 6500 DL

- » automatic and fast cleaning in one operation
- » large capacity due to "double layer"
- » mobility, wash where you want, directly on the wall, inside or outside, ...
- » flexible use for optimal workflow, wherever you want
- » easy & efficient for everybody to handle
- » safe technology
- » independency (financial & organizational) of service providers, everything can be done by yourself



SCAN FOR MORE INFO

ROCKETEC: less washing, get focus on routesetting



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RENTAL HOLD PROGRAM

Chicago / USA

For a monthly fee we will deliver 40-90 holds from various hold companies to your gym. You will have 3 months to set and use the holds. After the 3 month period we will pick up the dirty holds and deliver another round of holds for the next 3 month period.

THE PROGRAM

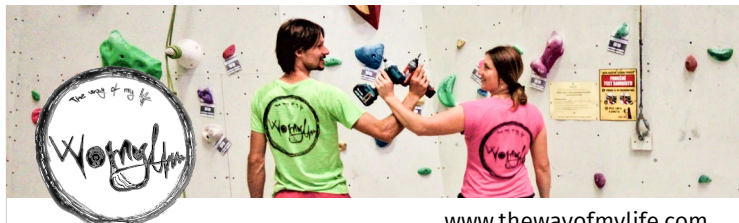
- › Rent 40-90 holds for \$129 a month.

CURRENT HOLDS AVAILABLE

- › Capital - Enix - Thrive
- › Escape - Kilter - Arc

Get more details by visiting our website - www.stokedclimbingvolumes.com >Rental Program> Hold Rental

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ROUTE SETTERS ON THE ROAD

Travelling across Europe

We are couple of route setters - Petra and Martin. We live in van and travel for route setting and climbing. We are searching for a gyms, which want some new routes from new people. We are flexible, creative and have experiences from gyms in different countries.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- › Routes: 3 - 7c
- › Experiences: CZ, SK, PL, IT, AT, DE
- › Licences: rope access, platform, freelancers in EU
- › Positive feedback

ABOUT US

Both of us have been climbing for more than 15 years. First route setting experience 10 years ago. Professional route setting more than 3 years. When we don't climb or route set, we hike, explore, do canyoning, via ferratas or sleep.

Contact: thewomyl@gmail.com, +420 608 049 692



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- › Certified Route Setter
- › Certified Instructor for athletics, fitness, co-ordination and nutrition
- › Climbing teacher

JBOC OFFERS:

- › Route setting
- › special propositions (e.g) grimps for rental
- › Conceptions for educational courses, the perfect addition for your existing climbing-team. 80% of our participants of adult climbing courses take part in all bottom-up courses (beginners to technique).

Active marketing measures for climbing courses, route setting and training

Contact: Eisgraben Straße 32 / 5081 Anif / Austria / info@jdoc.at



www.frictionaddiction.com.au

TOMMY KRAUSS

Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

FREELANCE COMMERCIAL ROUTESSETTER & AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL HEAD ROUTE SETTER BOULDERING

Freelance setter based out of Hobart, Tasmania, helping gyms create a professional product to deliver to their community. Services range from commercial and competition setting, head setting as well as clinics, consulting, mentoring and anything in between.

Contact: tom@frictionaddiction.com.au



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Vertical-Life

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Are you passionate about climbing and technology? Do you believe that innovation can increase professionalism and quality in the indoor climbing industry? If you are well versed in your country's climbing scene, have an understanding of distribution channels, and are motivated to shape the future of climbing together with us, then become a Vertical-Life partner.

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ROUTE SETTER

CLASSIFIED ADS

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Contact: sales@vertical-life.info



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