

#4
2021/22

ROUTE SETTER

a magazine for route setters
and climbing gyms

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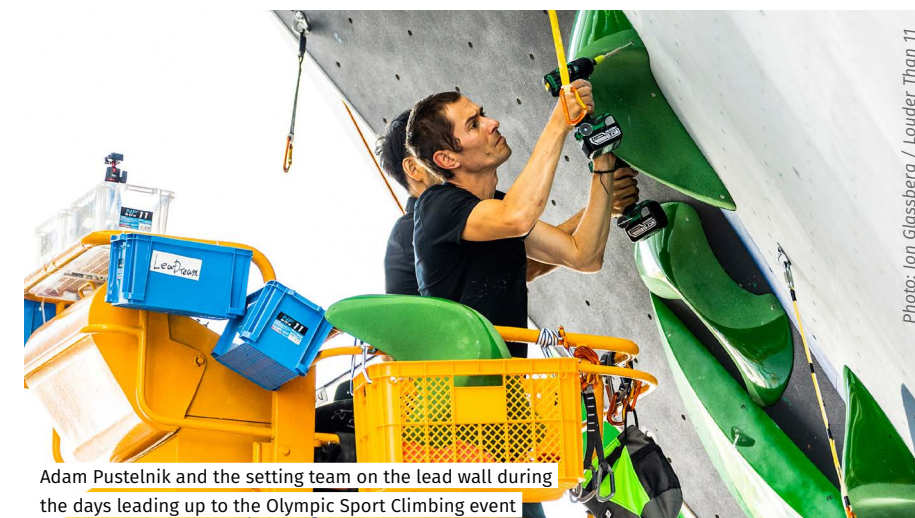


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Adam Pustelnik and the setting team on the lead wall during the days leading up to the Olympic Sport Climbing event

Photo: Jon Glassberg / Louder Than 11

EDITOR'S NOTE

A Slight Traverse

It seems like a lifetime ago that we published our first issue of Route Setter Magazine in 2018. Much has changed since then, and not everything has gone to plan. We thought last year's issue would be the Olympics issue, and even upon publication, we didn't expect COVID-19 to still be a focal point and challenge going into the final months of preparation for this year's issue. What hasn't changed over the years are our enthusiasm and passion for producing this magazine. In spite of all the upheaval and uncertainty in recent times, being part of the climbing industry and working on this project still energizes us and gives us purpose.

There's no sugar coating it: 2020-2021 has been an epic journey that has continually interrupted our plans and our industry's previous upward trajectory. It seems safe to say that it has forced all of us in the climbing industry to take stock and rethink what we can offer – and how – in order to ensure our survival and safeguard our chances of climbing another day.

We have looked outward to many of you during this challenging period, and we have found inspiration in all of the new and creative measures that you have taken to keep your businesses and local climbing communities strong and connected. Thanks to your influence and collab-

oration, we built a reservation system to help climbing gyms operate safely at limited capacities. We then adapted this service and offered it to businesses beyond climbing gyms. Known as No-Q, this side project has already handled over 22 million COVID-19 test reservations at pharmacies in Germany alone. By taking this slight traverse and deviating from our usual route, as many of you also did, we were able to endure the rockiest periods and to guarantee that we could come back stronger and keep on climbing and working together with you.

We would like to thank everyone that helped make this issue happen by contributing fantastic insights, topics, and stories. We hope that this year finds you better off than the last, and that together we can keep sharing our love for the sport and can continue growing and sharing it in the best way possible. In this issue, we've tried our best to highlight stories and individuals that inspire us and remind us to live in the moment, take action, and be resilient. Time doesn't wait. This project is a labor of love that we hope gives you, the reader, the same joy to read as it gives us to create.

Sincerely,

Matthias Polig & The Vertical-Life Team

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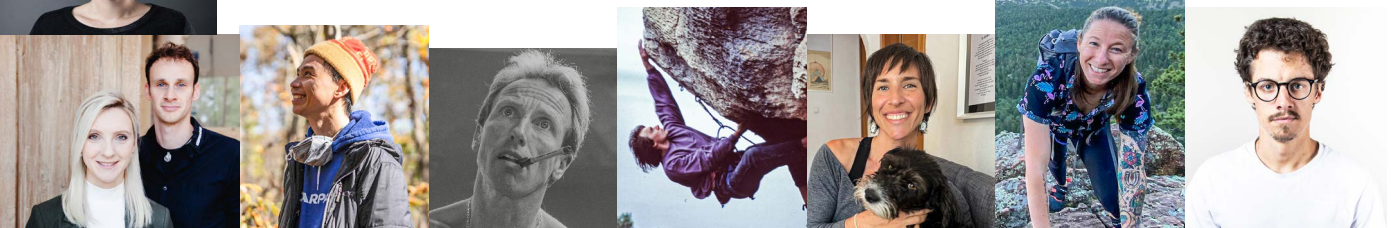


Gym: Pacific Pipe Climbing, Oakland, CA, USA | Climbing Surface: 4 274 m²

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FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER

THE OLYMPIC DEBUT OF SPORT CLIMBING

BY MIKE LANGLEY



At the Tokyo 2021 Olympic Games, the world witnessed the debut of a sport that sums up the Olympic motto “Citius, Altius, Fortius” (“Faster, Higher, Stronger”) – sport climbing. Despite the seemingly perfect fit, it took us many years of hard work to reach this historic moment. In 2016, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that climbing had been accepted into the Tokyo Olympic Games in a format where all athletes would have to compete in the three climbing disciplines for one combined medal. For some, the Olympic fever had started on hearing this news. Many remained skeptical of the format, which they believed did not reflect climbing’s true nature of having specialised disciplines. Yet others stayed pragmatic – the foot in the Olympic door was what mattered.



I always saw the potential for our industry when climbing became an Olympic sport, and when I was asked by BBC Sport to provide commentary for their TV coverage of climbing at the Olympics, I felt deeply honoured to be able to introduce our sport to the wider public and to reveal its beauty to the world.

But I am not here to sell you the Olympic dream or even to write a detailed report on the event. What I want to do in this article is review climbing’s first Olympic outing from different points of view. In Part I, I interview Olympic route setters to get the behind-the-scenes of setting in Tokyo and to learn about the challenges they faced and the fine balance between success and disaster. In Part II, I ask an Olympic climbing coach to give his perspective and look at climbing’s first Games through the lens of the media.

PART I - ROUTE SETTING AT THE OLYMPICS

There is something unique about competition climbing – it involves a field of play that relies on the route setter. In other sports, the heavy weight of the event’s success falls on the organisers’ and athletes’ shoulders, but in climbing, the route setter can make it or break it. This level of reliance was tested to its fullest at the biggest sporting event of them all – the Olympic Games. I caught up with Jan Zbranek (CZE) from the lead setting team and Percy Bishton (UK) from the boulder setting team to learn about their journey of setting in Tokyo.

Both are highly experienced international setters. Jan (35) has been setting for 20 years – more than half of his life! Percy (49) started his international competition setting career in the late 1990s. Neither setter put their names

forward for Olympic setting, but neither could turn down the opportunity when they were asked to do it. Jan is open about how excited he was for climbing to enter the Olympic arena. He had been harbouring hopes that this day would come for a long time:

“I started my IFSC route setting career in 2007 – the year when the IFSC was born along with climbing’s Olympic dream. It became natural to see the Olympics as the most important competition to set. Many times, while working at the World Cup or World Championships, I felt that if we did our job well maybe we could help climbing to be at the Olympics one day. It felt exciting, even though we didn’t know how long it could take. And then it happened... When I was asked to work at the Olympics, I remember feeling extremely happy. At least for a few moments, before I realized all the pressure that comes with the task.”

I asked both setters what personal attributes made them a good choice for the biggest job in the industry. Jan mentions his willingness to invest his whole heart into the job and his ability to improvise. Passion for the job ranks high on Percy’s top list alongside his ability to cope with pressure and being thick-skinned. Neither forgets to mention their experience. After all, according to Jan, with experience comes confidence:

“To take any route setting job requires a certain amount of self-confidence. The bigger the comp, the more confident you need to be to feel okay to set. For me it took a lot of preparation to understand the physical level of the competitors and to learn to predict the feelings they get while climbing.”

I wonder if this extraordinary ability of competition route setters to accurately under-

stand athletes’ physical limits down to the precision of a few moves is appreciated enough in our industry. Even trying to explain it to other climbers can prove difficult. Yet we take this phenomenal fine-tuning, on which climbing’s success at the Olympics was riding, for granted. What is also often overlooked is the intensity of the job and the logistical challenges. Jan provides a behind-the-scenes look at setting four Olympic routes on the 15-meter-high wall in Tokyo:

“We had to set two final routes and two qualification routes. We started with the finals. First, we divided into two teams. One team was focused more on the women’s routes, the other one more on the men’s routes. ... We started our work five days before the opening ceremony. We spent the first four days focusing on the final routes. ... We shared the venue with 3x3 basketball – they played dur-



ing the first week of the Olympics, with climbing taking place afterwards. Luckily, we still had some limited time to work even when the basketball was on. Our last chance to work on the routes was during the night before the event. We climbed on the routes with head torches and made some final adjustments.”

With the stakes high enough to require night-time testing with head torches, the setters had to rely on smooth teamwork. The chief setter on the Olympic lead climbing team was Adam Pustelnik from Poland. Jan has worked with Adam on many international competitions over the last ten years, swapping the role of chief setter between them. Jan reveals what it takes to work well with someone under the huge pressure of the Olympics:

“I really admire him as a route setter and also as a friend. Over the last ten years, we learned about our strengths, but also about our weaknesses. I think we can be absolutely open with each other and say anything that comes to our minds. This is priceless, especially during the sleepless nights before the competition when the pressure builds up.”

Questions about the most important preparations needed for the Olympics prompt Jan to reflect once again on the importance of having a team you can trust:

“The most important preparation was getting to know each other while we were setting together before the Olympics. The whole team worked together during the Hachioji World Championships in 2019. Adam, Hiroshi Okano, and I also set together this year in Innsbruck.”

The team had an opportunity to use 3D software providing models of the Olympic wall and images of holds so that they could set

“[WE HAD] TO CREATE A ROUTE THAT CELEBRATED THE BEAUTY OF LEAD CLIMBING FOR THE BEST ATHLETES IN THE WORLD, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME BEING UNDERSTANDABLE TO THOSE WHO WERE WATCHING THE SPORT FOR THE FIRST TIME.” JAN ZBRANEK

digitally before they arrived in Tokyo. Jan believes that these models have potential, but also recalls feeling a little uncomfortable about testing them out at the Olympics:

“I think we still have a lot to learn about how to use them. We tried, but in the end we chose to follow our instincts and set old school.”

Climbing’s Olympic debut is not a good time and place for new tricks. And the same can be said for holds. I asked Jan how he felt when setters received the IFSC T20 catalogue – a 35-page selection of official holds, macros, and volumes to be used at the Olympic Games. Jan is honest about his lack of initial enthusiasm:

“When you set for the Olympics, it is very easy to feel the pressure to set something special. Something more. So, at the beginning, it was a bit hard to get excited about the holds – we have all seen and used them a million times before. But during the route setting, especially during the final tuning of the levels of the routes, I started to be extremely thankful for all the experience we had gained in the past with these holds. We knew what to expect from them when the conditions (especially the humidity) changed. That was priceless.”

Even a good team and familiar holds do not guarantee success when you consider the formidable ultimate goal – the elusive one-top route. Jan had discussed this with his team:

“To have one top in the final was the dream. But to have more than one could be a disaster. We decided that achieving one top in the final should be comparable to setting a world record in any other sport. This means the best lead climber would perform perfectly on a route tailored perfectly to the weather and other factors.”

Despite the enormous challenge of high-precision setting, Jan notes that the setters did not “play it safe.” Instead, they tried to strike a balance between staging a good show and a fair competition. And if all that wasn’t enough, Jan describes another task unique to setting for the Olympics:

“[We had] to create a route that celebrated the beauty of lead climbing for the best athletes in the world, while at the same time being understandable to those who were watching the sport for the first time.”

Showcasing lead climbing to the public, setting the dream one-top route in the men’s



finals, and putting on a great show – Jan’s team realised it all! Jan and Adam had created the perfect show before at the 2016 World Championships. He compares the experiences:

“I feel pretty lucky that my name is connected to both of these beautiful routes. Before the Olympics, the Paris men’s final route was the most important route of my career. Sometimes I wondered if I would ever be able to set something similar or if I should just have retired after Paris. I’m super happy it worked out in Tokyo. Maybe I can retire now!”

Lead climbing’s Olympic debut was an undoubted success. But before each lead route, the athletes were tested on the boulders. I asked Percy to reflect on bouldering at the Olympics:

“...In my opinion, the boulders were excellent – but the format of the competition greatly limited the climbers’ opportunity to really show off our sport. Unfortunately, this was always going to be the case for climbing’s first Olympic outing. For me, this is why the qualification rounds were so much better (in my opinion) than maybe the finals were...”

I must agree with Percy that bouldering was not revealed to the public in its full glory, not only because of the format, but also because of the media’s underrepresentation of it. In the BBC’s daily highlights videos, all the speed climbing runs were featured as well as a lot of the lead climbing, but very little



Photo: Jon Glassberg / Louder Than 11

bouldering was shown – not enough to give viewers any true sense of the discipline at any rate. I asked the Lead Executive of BBC Sport why bouldering got so little airtime, and he told me that he felt it was hard for people to follow. The media’s lack of interest in bouldering is in stark contrast to its popularity in the “real world” – it is the fastest growing climbing discipline. Percy elaborates on the obstacles faced by bouldering at the Olympics:

“Honestly, I think that the bouldering round looked like a poor cousin to speed and lead in Tokyo. The format of the combined competition was engineered to fit into the constraints of the Olympics, and it felt like the bouldering round was squeezed into the format to meet the media’s requirements as opposed to showcasing our sport. A three-boulder final is never going to be any fun for the athletes or the viewers – it’s an impossible task to set boulders that test all the climbers’ skills with just three problems.”

“I THINK SOMETHING HAS TO CHANGE VERY SIGNIFICANTLY TO PUSH THINGS FORWARD, OTHERWISE BOULDERING MIGHT END UP NOT BEING AT THE GAMES AT ALL IN THE FUTURE.” PERCY BISHTON

The change in the bouldering format was not the only frustration Percy experienced. He describes the far-from-normal working environment and stresses brought on by the global COVID-19 pandemic:

“Besides the stress of constant testing, the quarantine regulations meant that we were either at work or in our hotel rooms. We had no significant social contact outside of our working environment, and this made it very

difficult to wind down after work and to discuss the problems we had worked on during the day. It’s funny how you don’t understand the significance of some small parts of the job until they are missing. Having a meal, a beer, and some space to chat about work away from your workplace is an important yet easily overlooked part of the job!”

Meanwhile, Jan tried to manage his stress by making time to read a book every day while he was in Japan, but he too experienced personal challenges:

“It was a long time to be without my family. I missed them a lot and I wish I could have taken them with me. It was the most important competition of my career and I really wanted to share all my emotions with them.”

It is easy to forget the “human factor” when thinking about route setters. They are there to produce the perfect show and anything less than that will attract unsolicited criticism. Yet route setters are their own biggest critics. Jan describes the emotions he felt when his work was tested in front of millions of eyes:

“...I was too nervous to watch the final route from my chair. I sat down on the floor close to Akito [Matsushima], [whom] we had set the route with, and Adam and Juinji, who had helped us with the testing. While watching the climbers on the wall, I was going through all the changes we had made during the night. I had been the only one on the wall, climbing at 4am with no wind, the wall completely wet, and I was just guessing how the holds would feel to the climbers the following evening. When Adam Ondra fell two moves from the top, after a near-perfect climb, I heard him say to his coach that the last hold he had touched was too small to hold. This was one of the holds we had changed the night before... I was so scared we had pushed this one move too far. It is so easy to make a mistake like that. When 20 minutes later Jakob Schubert did the move, I stopped watching. I didn’t care about the top anymore; my eyes were full of tears. I was so relieved that the move was possible.”

The passion and raw emotion of striking the right balance was comparable to Jan winning the Olympic medal himself! Meanwhile, Percy – perhaps sarcastically – brushes off the emotions of the day as just “another day in the office.” He later confesses that watching the competition was an intense experience and he defies any setter to not feel the pressure during the actual competition. He acknowledges that he has had more practice at deal-



Photo: Jessica Talley / Louder Than 11

PERCY BISHTON

Born: 1972

Lives in: Hope Valley, The Peak District
Background: Degree in agriculture, climbing instructor and international route setter, one of the owners of The Climbing Works in Sheffield and Gravity climbing wall in Dublin, Ireland.

ing with it than a lot of other setters, which helps him to stay reasonably chilled out.

With so many insights into the logistics, teamwork, challenges, and emotions involved in route setting at the Olympics, there is one thing still to discuss – the future. With lead climbing’s future at the Olympics looking bright, I wanted to ask Jan about his personal future. If he were asked, would he set at the Olympics again?

“This question is more complicated for me than it may seem. I would love to set one more Olympics in my career, especially because I would like to see the event take place with spectators. But for me personally, it was a very difficult task. The position of international route setter is still a very underdeveloped role and many of us don’t get much support from our national federations. I love my job so much but, after the Olympic final, I felt that unless there is a change in how route setting works, this may be the last big competition for me.”

I asked Percy about his thoughts on the future of bouldering at the Olympics. This is how he sees it:

“[The Olympic format] was a necessary part of getting our sport into the Olympic Games, and I understand and appreciate the work that went into this achievement. Having said that, I think something has to change very significantly to push things forward, otherwise bouldering might end up not being at the Games at all in the future. I am very enthusiastic about the challenges this presents and I am working very hard to dream up some better ways of presenting competitive bouldering.”



Photo: Red Bull Content Pool

KILIAN FISCHHUBER

Born: 1983

Lives in: Innsbruck, Austria
Background: Teaching degree in Sports and English, World Cup victories in bouldering from 2004 to 2014. Nationally certified climbing trainer since 2013 & current head of trainer education and development. Austrian national team coach since 2019.

I was impressed, but not surprised, by the passion, resilience, and emotion radiating from the route setters’ answers. I noticed that they did not share many stories about the women’s routes and boulders. There is an easy explanation for that – Janja Garnbret. She dominated the women’s field to such an extent that most of the climbing drama was played out in the men’s division, where the winner was far less easy to predict. Jens Larsen ran a very popular “predict a winner” poll on 8a.nu and told me that there were many correct predictions for the women’s podium but none for the men’s.

For the route setters, however, it is not about who walks away with the medal around their neck, but how well the competition plays out. We counted on their calculated judgement and cool heads for climbing’s Olympic debut. So many stakeholders in the sport relying on so few individuals. I wonder if the route setters even realise that they held a huge chunk of the sport’s future in their hands in Tokyo.

PART II - OLYMPICS FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE, MEDIA ATTENTION, AND ITS IMPACT

Depending on how you are involved in the Olympics – be it route setting, coaching, competing, or reporting – the Olympic journey takes a very different shape, from the challenges and worries faced, to the gains and rewards received. In the second part of this article, I seek to gain two different perspectives on the Olympics from two people involved in climbing at the Games in two different ways.

Ex-athlete and Austrian team coach Kilian Fischhuber (AUT) reveals details of the Olym-



Photo: Alex Messenger

NATALIE BERRY

Born: 1991

Lives in: Edinburgh
Background: Former GB Climbing Team competitor, rock climber and journalist.

pic athletes’ preparations and discusses the future of speed climbing, and journalist and editor-in-chief at UKClimbing.com (UKC) Natalie Berry (UK), who was present in the Olympic arena, sheds light on the media’s coverage of climbing at the Olympics and the impact it had on our sport.

Kilian is a legend of the sport and has been on a Bouldering World Cup podium an astounding 47 times! He is now helping other Austrian athletes to realize their podium ambitions. Kilian is one of four Austrian team coaches. He shares some details of their Olympic preparations:

“In the run-up to Tokyo, we focused on our two qualified athletes. We had a separate bouldering wall installed and simulation comps for several weeks. We researched rubber and chalk, prepared for the heat in Tokyo, and planned food and drinks.”

Although Kilian was not bitten by the Olympic bug straightaway because of his skepticism of the three-discipline format, he admits that he now sees things differently:

“Being in the Olympics has had far more positive effects on the sport than negative. Nevertheless, we should not get tired of pointing out possible improvements!”

Kilian shared that the Austrian team athletes focused on training in one discipline while trying not to neglect the others. I expected the Austrian lead or boulder specialists to feel resentment towards having to train in speed. Kilian admitted that he had to manage some of that, but he also said something surprising:

“Jakob [Schubert] said that he really liked speed climbing!”



JAN ZBRANEK

Born: 1986

Lives in: Malá Skála (CZE)
Background: IFSC chief routesetter, owner and shaper of Moveholds, Czech Republic

I could not miss the opportunity to find out the coach’s perspective on Jakob taking away bronze with an incredible top of the men’s final lead route. This was the very same moment that was the highlight of Jan’s life’s work and brought tears to his eyes (see Part I of this article). Kilian gives his account:

“The mental strength he displayed perplexed me. Maybe he was just able to deliver because he had thought that he had little chance of getting a medal in the end (after the way the speed and bouldering rounds played out).”

Kilian did not hide his hopes of there being three separate medals for the three climbing disciplines at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games. At the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, speed climbing will have a stand-alone medal, but bouldering and lead will remain combined. This is a great step for speed climbing, which is a highly specialised discipline. The women’s world record is 6.84 seconds and the men’s 5.20 seconds, making speed climbing the fastest race at the Olympics! I picked Kilian’s brain on the future of the speed route – should it change? Here are his thoughts:

“FOR THE ROUTE SETTERS... IT IS NOT ABOUT WHO WALKS AWAY WITH THE MEDAL AROUND THEIR NECK, BUT HOW WELL THE COMPETITION PLAYS OUT.” MIKE LANGLEY

“...It would be exciting if they broke the five-second barrier. But then it might actually make sense to change the route. ... I feel that [the speed run] is so short already – why continue in that direction forever? It could make sense to have a new route every Olympic Games, but then the world record would lose its meaning.”

It was great to gain Kilian’s perspective, as it was interesting to learn about his experience of being in the Olympic Village, which he describes as “jaw dropping.”

Someone else who can testify to the atmosphere of the Tokyo Games is Natalie Berry, who was in the Aomi Urban Sports Park press area when the sport climbing was on. Natalie was UKC’s reporter and shares her impressions of the Olympic climbing scene:

“It certainly felt bigger than an IFSC event, but the atmosphere was a bit strange given the lack of spectators and the ‘no cheering’ rule. I’ve never seen so many photographers with massive zoom lenses and huge broadcast cameras and cranes! When IOC President Thomas Bach attended the finals, there was a big secret service presence, which must be a first for a climbing competition! There were moments when people impulsively cheered as an athlete did something big, unintentionally breaking the COVID rules momentarily in sheer joy.”

Most of us in the industry were excited to show off our sport to millions who did not

know much about it. But these millions were not going to learn about climbing firsthand, but through the lens of the media. And the media can zoom in on or neglect aspects of climbing to suit their needs. Natalie summarises the central themes that the media focused on when reporting on climbing at the Olympics:

“Predictably, it seems like speed climbing caught people’s attention. There’s also been a lot of interest in Janja Garnbret’s story and it seems like Alberto Ginés López is now a big star in Spain, and Akiyo Noguchi and Miho Nonaka attracted new fans and national media attention at their home event. A lot of journalists also picked up on the collaborative and friendly nature of our competitions, taking an interest in the communal route reading and the camaraderie between athletes...”

Speed climbing’s popularity among the general public came as no surprise – it is simple to understand, addictive to watch, and you can appreciate the athletes’ extraordinary abilities without having to try it yourself. But, as Natalie revealed, it wasn’t just speed that was attracting the level of media attention that the climbing industry is not used to. I wanted to gauge her opinion on whether this was climbing’s big moment of media hype. Her answer is decisive:

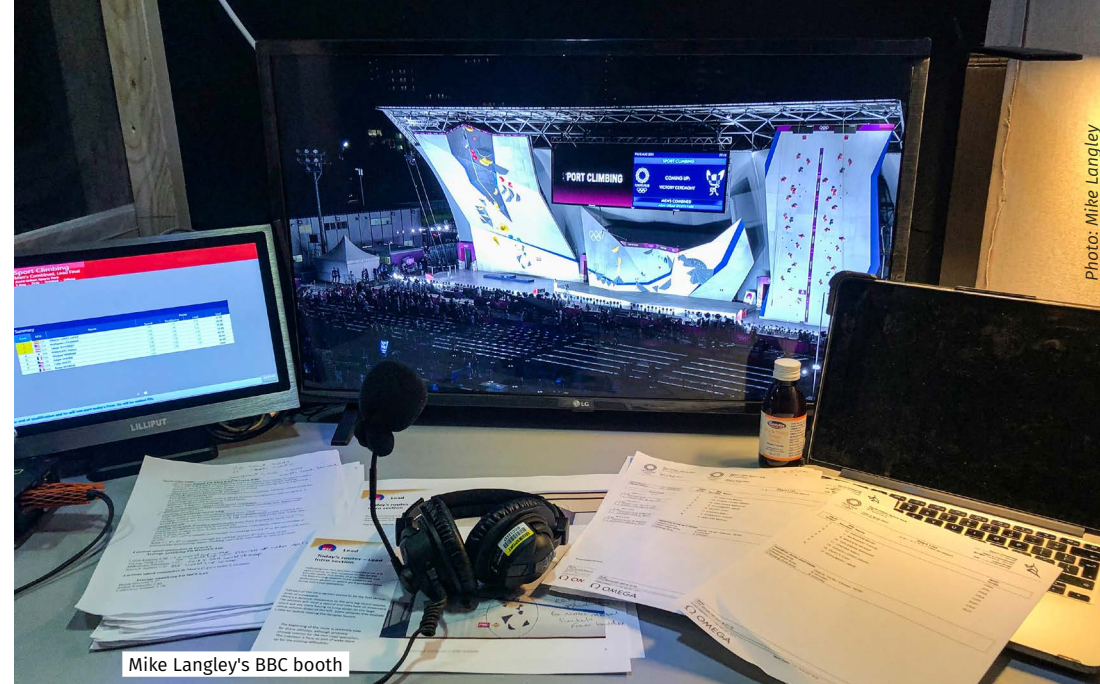
“Definitely. Athletes frequently appeared on television for major broadcasters like the

BBC and NBC. I wrote four stories about sport climbing that were released just before or during the Games for The New York Times, The Guardian, and WIRED magazine. There was extensive coverage by US media in particular, by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist John Branch for The New York Times and writers at The Washington Post.”

“NOW THAT CLIMBING IS ESTABLISHED AS AN OLYMPIC SPORT, THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA SHOULD FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE GIVING IT MORE EDITORIAL AND NEWS SPACE.” NATALIE BERRY

Natalie elaborates on the impact of the Olympics-fueled media attention:

“Sport climbing athletes gained around **692,957** Instagram followers in a ten-day period during the Games (an increase of 18.69% overall). Climbing also had a bit of a moment on Google, as their Trends account reported that sport climbing was the top trending Olympic sport in Google Search on day 11/day 12 of the Games worldwide. Overall, I’d say that the quality of climbing cover-



Mike Langley's BBC booth

age improved significantly – there were fewer clichés and more informed explanations from journalists.”

It is clear from Natalie’s reports that the Olympics raised climbing’s media profile significantly, but there is always the question of the future. What will competition climbing coverage look like in the years to come, and is the media’s interest in climbing brought on by the Olympics here to stay? Natalie shares her predictions:

“Now that climbing is established as an Olympic sport, the mainstream media should feel more comfortable giving it more editorial and news space. There will also be more and more coverage by online content creators on YouTube and TikTok. Social media influencers and content creators are frequently being invited to press events – sometimes in lieu of ‘traditional’ journalists.”

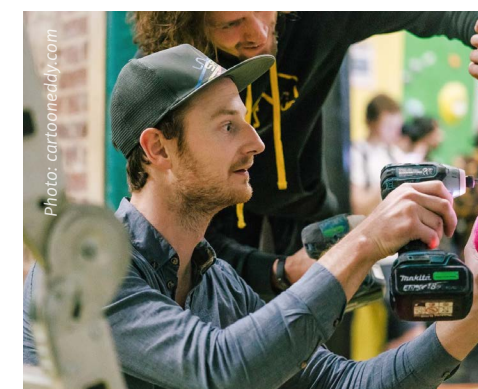
Natalie’s insights are truly valuable for understanding the impact media attention has had so far and where it might take us. For now, her reports of fewer clichés in the media’s reporting give me hope that the next time I tell a non-climber what I do for a living, I will not be asked about Mount Everest. Although, given speed climbing’s popularity, I fully expect to be asked how fast I climb (disclaimer: I am not a speed climber).

After climbing’s first Olympic outing, it feels like things will never be the same again. It is like the floodgates have been opened, the “dark horse” of sport released, and we are yet to witness what it can do. And following my enlightening interviews, the Olympic motto takes on a deeper meaning – the change within the industry is happening **faster** than ever before, the expectations are rising **higher**

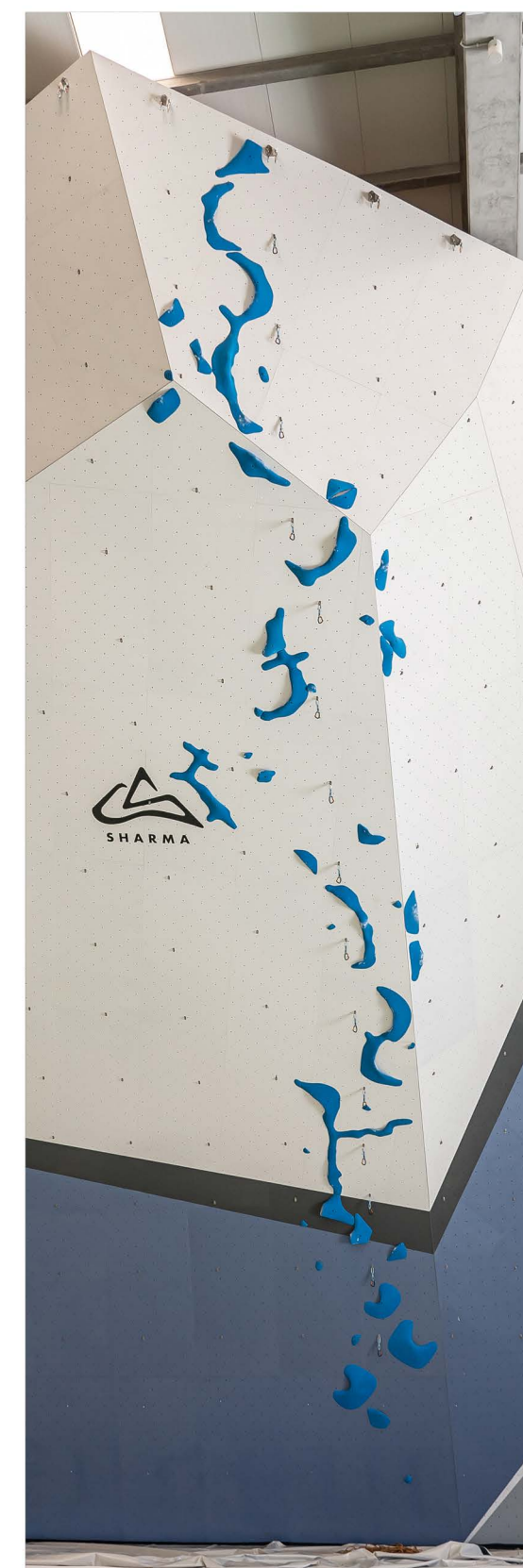
as the camera lights of the mainstream media shine on us, and the voice we are being given is making us **stronger** than ever.

Sure, there are complaints that climbing in the Olympics felt like an “exhibition” event due to the format. And there are hopes that in the future the format will change to include three medals for the three disciplines, representing our sport for what it is. Despite the many unknowns and the challenges that still await us, I am confident that after seeing our sport unveiled on the Olympic stage at Tokyo 2021, many cynics, skeptics, and agnostics have been converted to appreciate what this means for our industry.

Whatever your opinion, it was monumental, it was history in the making, and it was unparalleled to anything climbing has experienced before! 🧗



MIKE LANGLEY
Born: 1986
Lives in: London
Background: Started out on reception in the gym as a teenager and never looked back!



First tracks at the brand new Sharma BCN Gavà with the Kilter Smooth Tufa System, Lo Riders, and Noah Ledges.

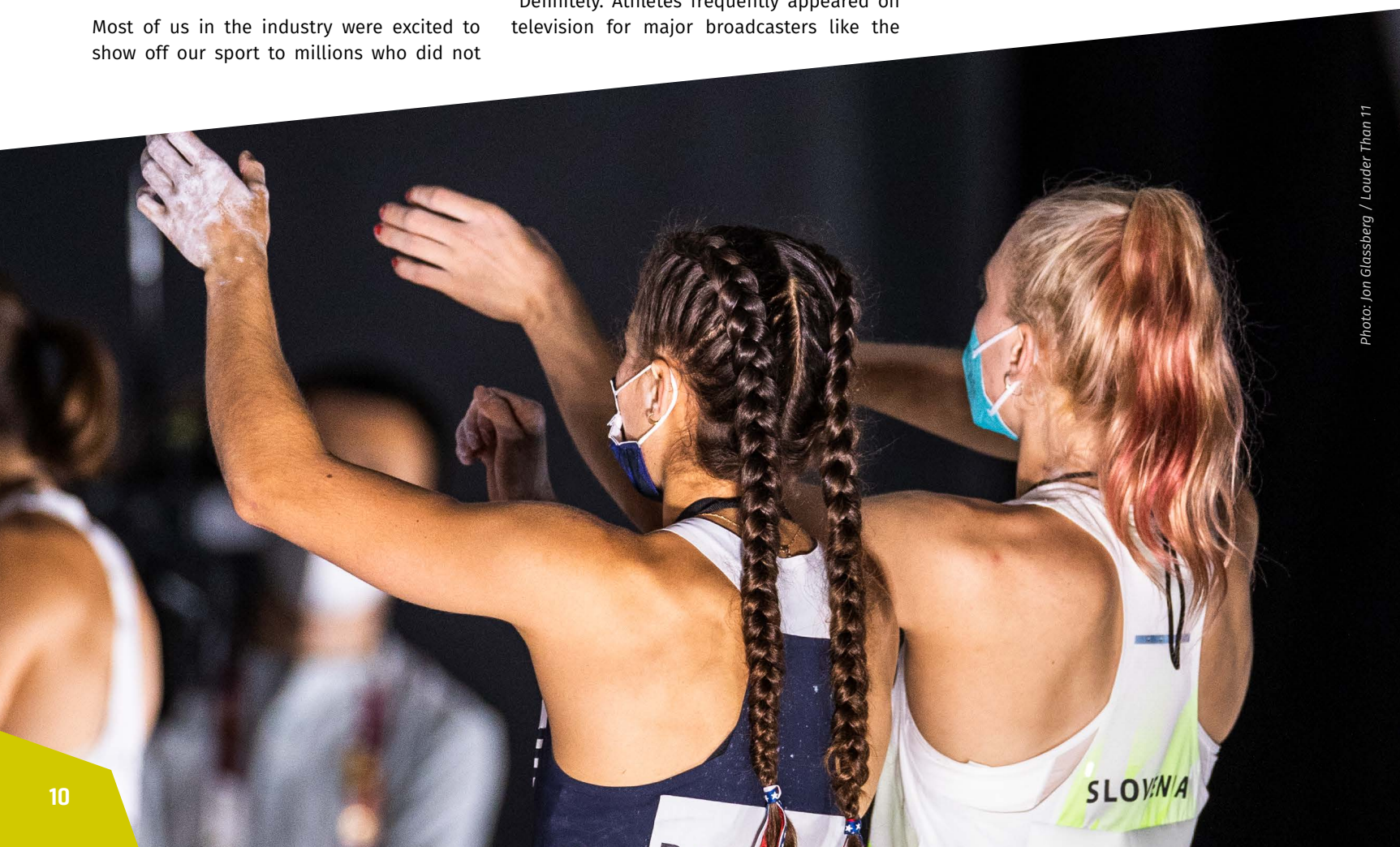


Photo: Jon Glassberg / Louder Than 11

THE RISE OF CLIMBING IN JAPAN

THE INSIDE STORY

TEXT & INTERVIEWS: CODY ROTH

◆ *The wealth of competitive talent that Japan has produced over the last decade is noticeable and impressive, and begs the question of what's their secret. We sit down with some of Japan's leading climbing gym professionals to gain their perspective on the rise of competitive climbing and the booming indoor climbing scene.*

◆ **PUMPed** (p.14)
THE BIRTH OF A CLIMBING REVOLUTION IN JAPAN

◆ **BASE CAMP** (p.18)
YUJI HIRAYAMA'S QUEST TO BUILD A LEGACY



PUMPed

THE BIRTH OF A CLIMBING REVOLUTION IN JAPAN

B-PUMP Tokyo 2011

PUMP is Japan's original mega gym brand. They've been offering indoor climbing to the island nation for nearly 30 years, and in that time they've watched indoor climbing grow from a fledgling supplement to outdoor climbing to a pursuit in itself. We caught up with two of PUMP's longest-serving protagonists to learn more about their story of growth and evolution.

RSM: When and where did PUMP get started?

Satoru: We opened our first gym, PUMP1, in Saitama Prefecture in 1993 and our second gym, PUMP2, in Kanagawa Prefecture two years later. Both of these prefectures are adjacent to Tokyo. In 1998, we opened PUMP OSAKA in Osaka Prefecture. Osaka is the third-largest city in Japan after Tokyo and Yokohama. PUMP1, PUMP2, and PUMP OSAKA offer both rope climbing and bouldering.

In 2002, we opened our first bouldering gym, B-PUMP, in Tokyo. This was followed by B-PUMP YOKOHAMA in Yokohama City in 2003 and B-PUMP TOKYO in central Tokyo in 2011. This gym is still the largest bouldering gym in Japan. In addition to opening new gyms, we've also renovated our existing gyms. We relocated PUMP1 in 1996, PUMP2 in 2006 and B-PUMP in 2007 and again in 2016. In 2017, we opened the PUMP Climber's Academy in Tokyo, which specializes in climbing training programs.

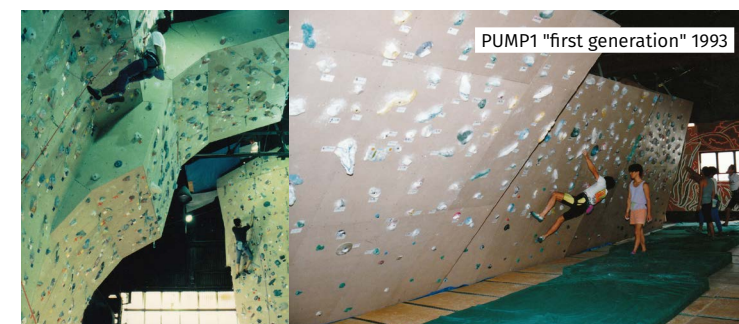
RSM: Who founded PUMP?

Satoru: The founder of PUMP is avid climber Naoya Naito, who has climbed over 500 5.12 routes (7a+ to 7c) and 50 5.13 routes (7c+ to 8b) all around the world. He also has a passion for bolting and first ascents, having developed more than 200 routes all over Japan between the 1980s and today.

When I asked him why he decided to start a climbing gym business, he said, "Since I was a student, I dreamed of having my own company one day. And after visiting a climbing gym in San Francisco, California and experiencing climbing there, I thought to myself that this was the business I wanted to start in Japan."

RSM: How does indoor climbing in Japan differ from other countries?

Satoru: In Japan, where space is hard to come by, it is important to design gyms efficiently. In many cases, a climbing gym's success is determined by how creatively and effectively that space is utilized. The number of wall angles that can be incorporated and how luxurious and unique the space feels compared with other gyms makes a big difference in Japan.



PUMP1 "first generation" 1993

Japanese climbing gyms tend not to have the amenities commonly found at gyms in Europe and North America, such as cafés, yoga studios, showers, and saunas. Instead, Japanese gyms are more spartan. You'll typically find a front desk with a small gear shop, changing rooms (no showers or saunas), and the climbing space itself. And that's it. If a European-style climbing gym were to open in Japan, the uniqueness of it would definitely capture the attention of the Japanese climbing gym scene!

"AFTER VISITING A CLIMBING GYM IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA AND EXPERIENCING CLIMBING THERE, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF THAT THIS WAS THE BUSINESS I WANTED TO START IN JAPAN." NADYA NAITO



PUMP1 "second generation" 1996

The small bouldering gym business model is perfectly suited to Japan. There are more than 80 climbing gyms in Tokyo Prefecture alone, and most of them are small-to-medium-sized facilities for bouldering only. Only a few facilities offer rope climbing.

Recently, the practice of setting boulder problems and routes by hold color (like in Europe) is becoming more mainstream. A few years ago, spray walls and taped boulder problems/routes were fairly common throughout commercial gyms. Even today, you can find gyms that only offer these two options. This concept is also born from the idea of maximizing the opportunities for climbing within a limited space.

Japanese climbers definitely appreciate commercial problems set by top route setters, but also love to create their own problems and session on spray walls.



B-PUMP "first generation" 2003



B-PUMP "second generation" 2007





B-PUMP "third generation" 2016



2019 Route setting team with Flo Murnig and Enrico Baistrocchi

According to Naito, "In Japan, climbing gyms largely compete with one another on the quality of their route setting. It's really hard to create a spacious climbing gym like you find overseas. The bouldering gym market is especially competitive, so the quality of the boulder problems is naturally high and each gym stands out in its own right. The quality of Japan's route setting has been world class for more than a decade. Japanese competitors are particularly strong because they have the chance to climb high-quality problems from childhood. I think that is a major factor in Japan's success in competition climbing."

RSM: When did you notice that indoor climbing in Japan was really growing in popularity?

Satoru: From our point of view, the opening of B-PUMP TOKYO in 2011 was the biggest game changer. We feel that it had an impact on the number of people climbing in Japan and on the sport's popularity.

RSM: Can you tell us about your route setting? How often do climbs change?

Satoru: It depends on the gym and the areas within the facility. On average, the areas that are most frequented are renewed monthly. Areas with a lower volume of traffic are sometimes renewed annually. This is done intentionally to provide our customers with long-term projects. Each of our gyms divides its facility into quadrants for resetting purposes. This means that new problems or routes are set somewhere in the facility approximately every week.

You'll find both in-house and freelance route setting in Japan. Each of these options has its pros and cons. We mainly rely on in-house route setting, but we sometimes invite external route setters to come in and set with us. I think it's very important for each climbing gym to have its own route setting team. For example, Masahiro Higuchi, who is a top lead climbing competitor in the World Cup, has been working in house for PUMP for six years. He is currently the chief route setter at PUMP2, our largest lead climbing facility. He has a good understanding of our

customers' needs and oversees the planning of each route set. As the chief route setter, his thoughts and style are reflected not only in his own routes, but in the coordination and route layout of the entire facility. Each PUMP and B-PUMP has a chief setter who is responsible for coordinating route setting across the entire gym.

I think professional Japanese route setters work to an extremely high standard. Fortunately for the PUMP gyms, I have great connections with route setters from overseas. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I used to invite Flo Murnig – who is an IFSC international chief route setter – and some other great setters recommended by Flo to set at

"I THINK PROFESSIONAL JAPANESE ROUTE SETTERS WORK TO AN EXTREMELY HIGH STANDARD."

PUMP gyms every year. Not only was this great for our customers and reputation, but it was also a fantastic opportunity for our staff and me to exchange ideas with world-class route setters from abroad. We were able to learn and be inspired by many things beyond just route setting. They also provided us with insights into the other aspects of running a climbing gym business.

RSM: Are local climbing competitions popular in Japan?

Satoru: I think so. Most local climbing competitions are currently on hold due to the pandemic, but Japan usually organizes several well-known competitions for climbers of all abilities. The most famous is The North Face Cup, which is a bouldering series run by Base Camp, a company founded by Yuji Hirayama. It's a commercial competition that is for everyone from beginners to top athletes. There are also several series competitions for hobby climbers as well as many competitions organized by individual climbing gyms throughout the year.



B-PUMP Tokyo 2011

RSM: What do you think the future holds for indoor climbing in Japan?

Satoru: I think there are plenty of climbing gyms in Japan at the moment. In fact, you could even say that the number of climbing gyms has reached the point of saturation and that the climbing gym business could become even more competitive. This might lead to the emergence of a completely new scale of climbing gym, or perhaps even to higher quality gyms. I'm really looking forward to seeing what the future brings.



SATORU ONDA / 恩田悟
Born: 1987
Lives in: Kanagawa, Japan
Background: Managing Director of 1st business division, Frontier Spirit Co.,Ltd. Manager of B-PUMP TOKYO, instructor, routesetter.
 /有限会社フロンティアスピリッツ 第一事業部部長
 ボルダリングジムB-PUMP TOKYO 店長

RSM: Is there anything that climbers visiting Japan should know or are there any local customs or courtesies that they should try and respect?

Satoru: Basically, I think that climbing culture is universal in many ways. If anything, I would remind visitors that keeping things in harmony is very important in Japan. Just try to be courteous and mindful of others.



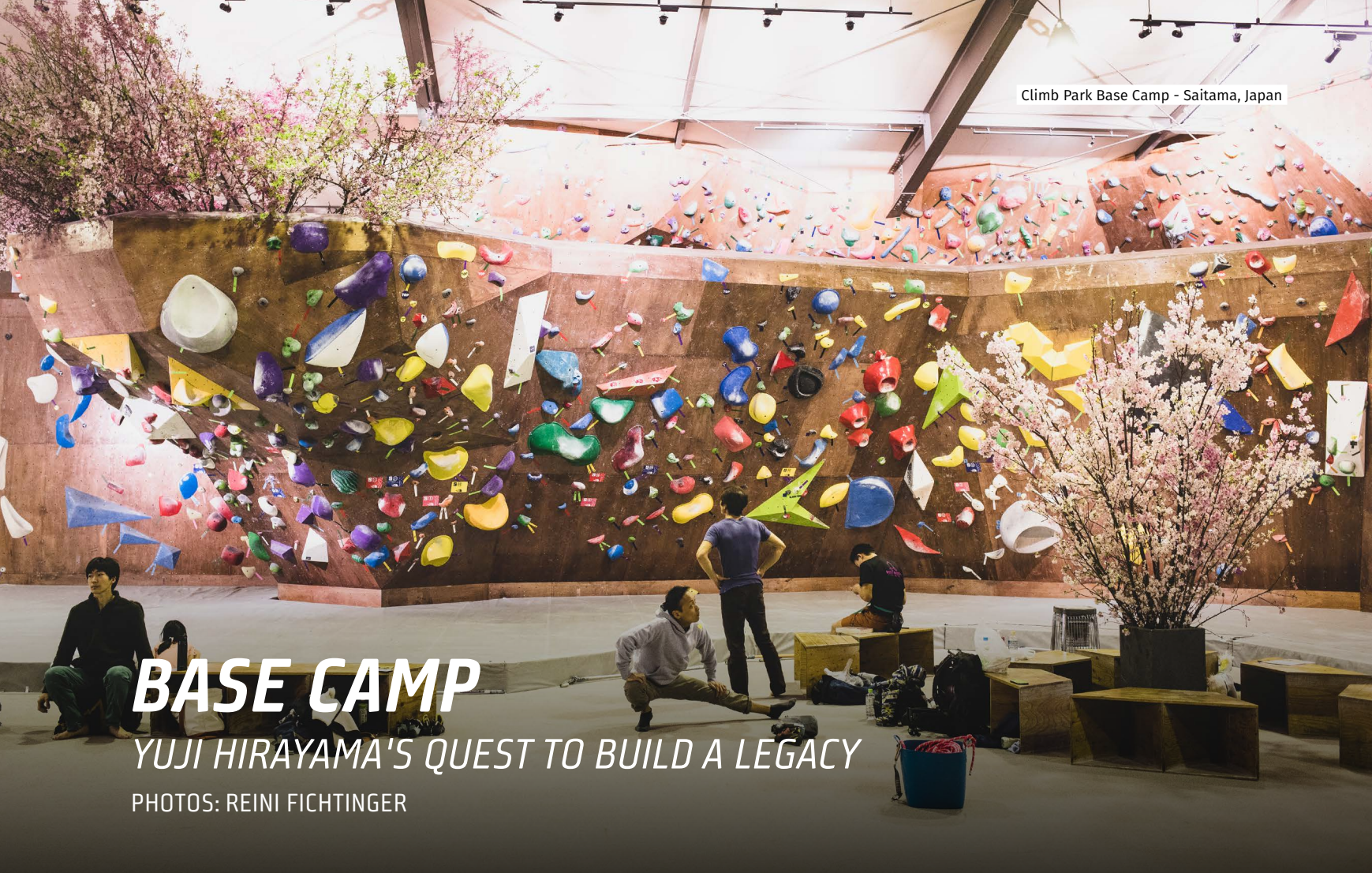
NAOYA NAITO / 内藤直也
Born: 1962
Lives in: Tokyo, Japan
Background: Founder, President & CEO of Frontier Spirit Co.,Ltd. avid climber, developer, author.
 /有限会社フロンティアスピリッツ代表取締役社長



Easy Up Rental

Climbing shoe especially developed for rental business

- . Non marking durable 4point grip sole
- . Anti microbial hemp inner fabric
- . Odor reducing coton-polyester upper fabric
- . Durable padded size marking at heel
- . Comfortable but progressive fit
- . Junior and adult sizes available
- . Developed in collab with routesetter peter zeidelhack



Climb Park Base Camp - Saitama, Japan

BASE CAMP

YUJI HIRAYAMA'S QUEST TO BUILD A LEGACY

PHOTOS: REINI FICHTINGER

◆ A household name among climbers globally, Yuji Hirayama is Japan's original climbing superstar. He started his climbing career as a mountaineer in 1982 and transitioned to rock climbing a few years later. In 1998, after already standing on numerous World Cup podiums, he became the first Japanese climber to win the overall World Cup. One year prior to that historic win, he freed El Capitan's Salathé in Yosemite, onsighting all but one pitch, and in 2004 he made headlines again by onsighting the world's first 8c. At 47, he was still climbing 8b+ boulders and now, at 52, he splits his time between climbing and running his gym chain, Base Camp, in and around Tokyo.

RSM: What was the climbing scene like in Japan when you started climbing? Was there already an indoor climbing community?

Yuji: It was very different from today. In fact, the climbing community was almost invisible. It wasn't easy to reach or connect with other climbers, and this made it hard to get started. We didn't have an indoor wall, so we trained on the walls of Edo Castle in Tokyo.

RSM: How did you get started in competitive climbing?

Yuji: After hearing about the first competitions and reading an article about the European competition scene in Climbing magazine, some Japanese climbers were inspired to organize the first free climbing competition at a seaside cliff in 1987. That was my first comp in Japan. My first international comp was at the International Open in Marseille, France in 1988. I met a French climber in Buoux who put us in contact with the organizers and I was able to participate.

RSM: What was the reaction in Japan to your World Cup success?

Yuji: I was living in Europe when my World Cup climbing took off, so it was very hard for me to gauge the exact reaction, but I think the Japanese climbers back home were surprised and I guess I gave them confidence and showed them that we can compete with the world's best. It's possible that my success also had a positive impact on the overall Asian climbing scene.

RSM: When did indoor climbing in Japan start to grow dramatically?

Yuji: I think it was around 2010 when a lot of indoor gyms began to open up all over Japan. I am not sure what exactly happened that year, but I think that bouldering had already been growing progressively for a decade. You could already sense the growth as far back as 2005, but by 2010 you just couldn't ignore it. Japanese real estate is very expensive, so small bouldering gyms are ideal for our country.

The Japanese government and the Japanese climbing federation didn't offer any help or allocate much funding to gyms. It was left to the private sector to build gyms, and once gym owners realized how popular bouldering was, gyms started to adapt to this trend. Bouldering is now the preferred style of climbing among most climbers in Japan and it has proven to be a good business model.



Boulder Park Base Camp - Saitama, Japan



RSM: When and how did you open your first climbing gym?

Yuji: I opened my first gym in July 2010. Just before turning 40, I thought to myself that I should start something new and build a second career. After all, you can't be a professional climber forever! Of course, I couldn't do it all on my own and I was so lucky to have good partners from the very beginning.

RSM: Can you tell us a little bit about the Base Camp gyms?

Yuji: Well, I just wanted to create a base camp for climbers. My gyms are defined by the core philosophy that climbers need a place to train, socialize, enjoy themselves, and heal their minds and bodies.

Today we have three gyms. One is in Tokyo and two are outside of Tokyo and are much closer to outdoor climbing locations. If we open more gyms, I think that we will build them close to outdoor climbing areas. My staff are climbers and a good work-life balance is important to them.

"MY GYMS ARE DEFINED BY THE CORE PHILOSOPHY THAT CLIMBERS NEED A PLACE TO TRAIN, SOCIALIZE, ENJOY THEMSELVES, AND HEAL THEIR MINDS AND BODIES."

RSM: What do you think the future holds for indoor climbing in Japan?

Yuji: I'd like to know that, too (laughs)! In Japan, we have 47 prefectures, which are the Japanese equivalent of states and provinces. Each prefecture is now interested in building a large public competition facility because we have a national competition every year. If a prefecture gets to host this competition, it's a great honor and opportunity for them.

Of course, the construction of larger private facilities is likely to be boosted by the Olympics as well, but I imagine that we will continue to add more core training and bouldering gyms for climbers to train in. I think that the trend of comp-style setting will support and increase the number of these types of gyms.

I believe that the high quality of route setting in Japan will continue to produce strong climbers. Our route setters have played a big role in increasing the number of talented Japanese climbers.

RSM: When visiting climbing gyms in other countries, have you come across anything that you would like to see more of in Japan?

Yuji: When traveling, I've noticed that gyms in the United States and Europe are much larger. Climbing facilities in Japan tend to be smaller and about 90% of them are bouldering-only gyms. When I visited gyms in Boulder and Denver, Colorado, and San Francisco, California, I felt that more people climbed here than in Japan. I would still like to travel abroad more and to learn about how the climbing gym business works in other countries.

Outdoor climbing and the outdoor culture in general seem to have a bigger influence on climbing gyms in the United States and Europe. The difficulty of the problems and routes in these countries is similar to what people find when climbing outdoors. When I asked the chief route setter at a gym in Colorado about this, he said that he tries to replicate the difficulty and experience of climbing on rock in the gym. We don't approach it this way in Japan. There's more of a distinction and separation between outdoor and indoor climbing here.

It also seemed apparent to me that most climbers in the United States and Europe do additional outdoor activities such as mountain biking and skiing. I especially noticed this while climbing in Germany, France, and Spain. In contrast, most climbers in Japan are satisfied with indoor climbing being their sole physical activity, and only a small minority of climbers pursue outdoor climbing. I think we should move closer to the US and European model by encouraging customers who come to a gym to climb outdoors as well. I should probably also do more to share my past climbing experiences with climbers in Japan to encourage more outdoor exploration. ◆



YUJI HIRAYAMA / 平山ユージ

Born: 1969

Lives in: Tokyo, Japan

Background: Professional rock climber and founder of Base Camp gyms. プロのロッククライマーであり、ベースキャンプ・ジムの創設者でもある。

BEHIND THE SCREEN OF COMPETITION CLIMBING

A NEW RESULT SERVICE SOFTWARE FOR CHAMPIONSHIPS AND CUPS

TEXT: VERTICAL-LIFE



Over the past few years, and especially with the Tokyo Olympics in mind, Vertical-Life has been working on developing an evaluation system for climbing competitions. On behalf of the IFSC (International Federation of Sport Climbing), we have created a new, innovative system for official competitions, which has already been used at numerous World Cups, World Championships, and national competitions. Here we report on this exciting, challenging project and how it came about.

Software isn't typically the first word that comes to mind to climbers when they are high off the ground, focused on their next sequence. Yet the convergence of software and climbing makes a lot of sense once you look beyond the mere joy of the sport. Measuring performance by applying grades to climbs, keeping track of personal development, and comparing oneself to fellow climbers have always been an integral part of climbing. Competitions allow audiences and viewers watching at home to share in the competing climbers' experience. Starting lists, scores, rankings, and rules are all a matter of sorting and performing calculations – the perfect job for software.

FUN CONTESTS MADE PAPERLESS AND EASY

Holding fun competitions in climbing gyms and at community gatherings frequently require organizers to make use of rudimentary methods like paper scorecards. Scores are worked out using complicated and slow manual calculations, and the results are laboriously typed into Excel spreadsheets. These processes are often slow and riddled with errors, and as official climbing competitions increased worldwide in both number and importance, it became clear that modern, more flexible solutions were needed to replace these old methods – especially on a large stage.

Vertical-Life's first connection to competition climbing came through its Smart Scorecard software, a digital scorecard and result ser-

vice created to simplify and improve the running of competitions at climbing gyms. The settings are flexible and easy to adjust, and the software handles a wide array of events, from single-day, multi-day, and multi-round competitions to climbing leagues and team events. Competitors can register online prior to an event, and the set-up accommodates self-scoring by the climbers on their personal scorecard or scoring kept by the judges on a general scorecard, all from the user's smartphone. The software essentially eliminates the organizational overheads that typically come with running competitions. This is because there is no need to manually enter and calculate scores, and there is no delay in making the final scores visible, as they're always displayed directly from the program in real time.

"SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS AND FEDERATIONS, RUNNING COMPETITIONS, AND PROVIDING ANALYSIS IS WHAT THE SMART SCORECARD AND RESULT SERVICE ARE BUILT TO DO."

TRANSFORMING THE SCORECARD INTO A TRUE, COMPLETE RESULT SERVICE

Creating the Result Service for the IFSC was a natural progression from developing the Smart Scorecard. The IFSC was looking for a dependable software solution that would provide a dynamic operating experience and cover its vast needs. At Vertical-Life, our team drew heavily on the experiences we gained when developing the Smart Scorecard, allowing us to create the Result Service in time for the IFSC's 2020 season. We received invaluable support from many people in the competition community, especially the IFSC Sport Department and IFSC Jury President Tim Hatch.

Aside from IFSC staff, the product development team also consisted of climbers who were already extremely familiar with the processes and rules of climbing events or who otherwise became versed in them during the course of the project.

The first challenge of creating the Result Service was the need to take into account each and every IFSC rule, as the rules cover every possible competitive scenario and outcome. We then had to lay out and define the structure, i.e. categories, disciplines, formats, and rounds. This was followed by designing the most crucial part of the Result Service: the

rankings. We had to test the system to ensure that it could sort competitors without a hiccup even in the most unlikely scenarios. In addition to these core elements, the Result Service handles license and membership management for partner federations and provides federations with an API (application programming interface) with a digital screen interface for displaying competitive calendars, rankings, and live results. Athletes and federation managers each have a digital dashboard for progress tracking and planning.

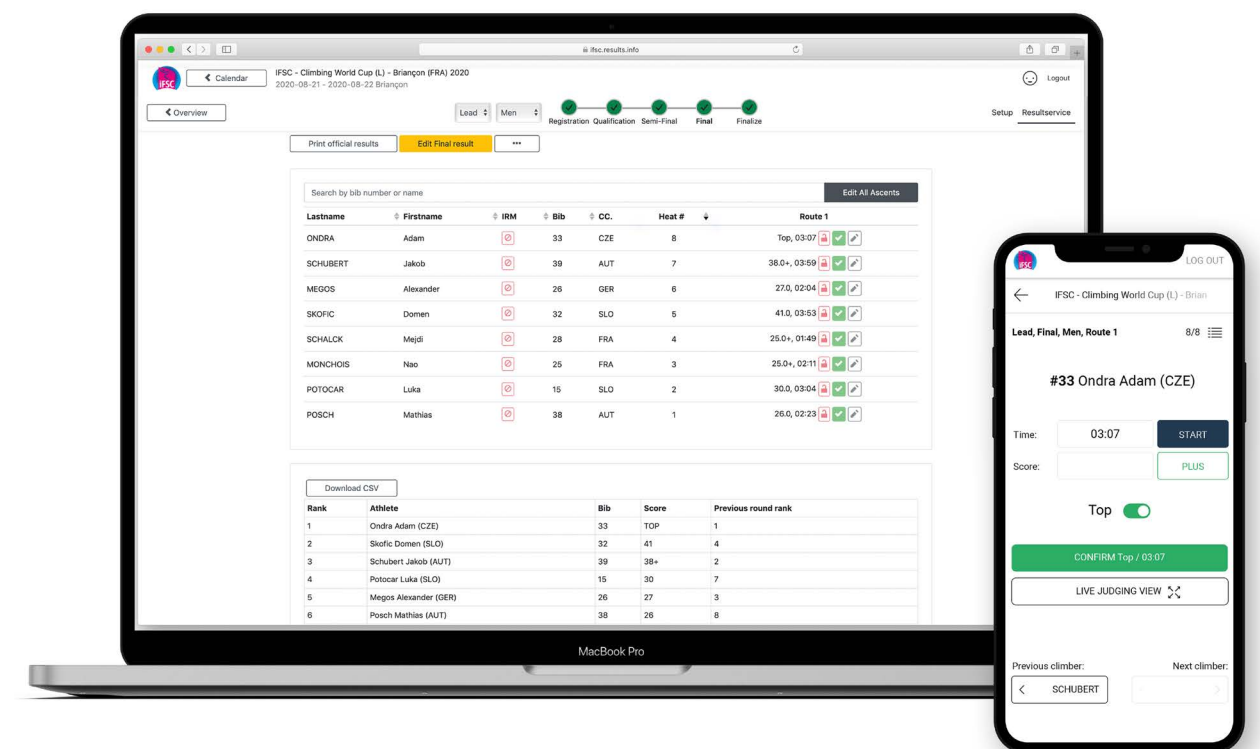
Since the Result Service was launched, over 300 IFSC, FASI (Italian Sport Climbing Federation), USA Climbing, and UIAA (International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation) climbing and ice climbing events have taken place. The Swiss Alpine Club recently signed up and is set to start using the service in 2022. In the last year and a half, the service has evolved to include numerous scenarios specific to youth and regional events. In collaboration with the FASI, we were able to add several features to the software that allow it to support competitions with multiple categories and athletes at competition venues with limited space and infrastructure. Thanks to our committed partnership with the IFSC, national federations that use the Result Service can run their events with the built-in IFSC rules and formats.

FUTURE-PROOF AND READY FOR MORE

The 2024 Paris Olympics are just around the corner, and with speed climbing slated to run as its own discipline with lead and bouldering making up the combined event, exciting times and developments still lie ahead for the Result Service. The Tokyo Games showed just how valuable good data is for audiences and broadcasters alike.

Supporting organizations and federations, running competitions, and providing analysis is what the Smart Scorecard and Result Service are built to do. Our goal is to provide climbers and gyms, event organizers, and federations with the best competition management experience possible, and last but not least, to help create memorable events for live audiences and viewers watching at home.

To find out more about the Smart Scorecard and Result Service, please email sales@vertical-life.info.



INSPIRING INITIATIVES

TEXT: CODY ROTH & MELISSA RUDICK

◆ *Spanning from a local to an international reach, these initiatives all started from a single idea, a hope to change the current status quo, and a desire to make climbing more inclusive. On the following pages, you can discover three exciting initiatives that have found a successful formula and gained a solid foothold. We hope that these examples will inspire others to create their own local initiatives or to contribute to existing ones.*

◆ **FINDING PEACE THROUGH CLIMBING** (p.24)
THE STORY OF ClimbaID

◆ **CLIMBING FOR CHANGE** (p.28)
A MISSION TO MAKE CLIMBING MORE INCLUSIVE

◆ **CLMBXR** (p.30)
HOW ONE CLIMBER INVITED HIS COMMUNITY TO SHARE IN THE EXPERIENCE

ClimbaID's mobile climbing wall, "A Rolling Rock", brought to children from the neighboring residential areas in the port of Beirut in the aftermath of the explosion from August 4th, 2020

Climbing session at an educational center for child labor victims, Saadnayel, Bekaa Valley, Lebanon



A Rolling Rock

Photo: ClimbiAID / Jamison Schmitt

FINDING PEACE THROUGH CLIMBING

THE STORY OF ClimbiAID

◆ **Founded in 2016, ClimbiAID seeks to support communities affected by war, poverty, and displacement. Their mission is to bring the joy of climbing to these communities and to use climbing to promote inclusion, mental health, and personal development. ClimbiAID also aspires to raise awareness of social injustice and environmental issues within – and beyond – the climbing community.**

ClimbiAID currently has three established projects. In Switzerland, the MaXi Family project uses climbing to help integrate asylum seekers. They currently have 10 different chapters across the country and they manage a bouldering wall in Zurich's Stadionbrache city park. Gyms that partner with ClimbiAID allow the group to climb and use rental equipment for free. Some of them even offer a "solidarity pass" to asylum seekers who get into climbing regularly and can't afford to pay the full fee.

In Lebanon, more than 2,000 children and young people have participated in ClimbiAID's "Climbing for Peace" project since it launched in 2017, with their signature mobile climbing wall "A Rolling Rock". Think of it as the climb-

er's equivalent to a food truck, delivering the joy of climbing right to the children who need it most.

Most recently, they've turned their attention to the Greek capital of Athens, where they've started an initiative called "Pame Pano!" (Greek for "Let's get up!"). This project strives to support unaccompanied minor asylum seekers who reside in asylum shelters in the city. The young people living here now have the opportunity to go climbing at ClimbiAID's partner gyms in Athens.

ClimbiAID's founder, Beat Baggenstos, was raised in the Swiss Canton of Aargau. As a teenager in the 90s, he saw firsthand the influx of refugees escaping the Yugoslav wars. He looks back on this experience as being a pivotal moment in his life, as it was the first time he saw injustice and felt a political and social drive to do something. Not everyone in his town and the surrounding villages welcomed the refugees, which became evident when far-right groups and neo-Nazis began coming out of the woodwork. In protest against rising anti-refugee sentiment,

the community rallied against the far-right by putting on concerts and fighting discriminatory political initiatives.

Beat went on to do a commercial apprenticeship in a small regional bank and later studied sociology, psychology, and political science. Despite always having been critical of globalized capitalism, he found himself working in the banking industry for over a decade. As time went on, he felt in conflict with the lack of morals and ethics connected to his line of work. Once he hit the nine-year mark at Deutsche Bank, he felt the gap had become too big. "In 2015, I quit my bank job without having any plans for the future and I just went traveling."

"I was first introduced to climbing by some friends at a local bouldering gym during my time in the corporate world. I loved it immediately, and at that time, my life was lacking a healthy outlet. I even quit smoking soon after I started climbing! When I left my job and took off traveling, I went to Argentina and Chile before heading to Mexico, and then Ethiopia. One thing that I especially began to love

about the climbing community during this time was the inclusivity. The local and international climbers I met in these places were really warm and welcoming. Yet on this trip, I was reminded that, sadly, climbing remains the reserve of a privileged few. In all of these countries there's a section of town and a segment of society that you don't see or interact with as a visiting climber. Prior to this, I had done trips solely for the sake of traveling, like backpacking from Istanbul to Damascus by bus. The way I interacted with my surroundings and the people on these types of trips was completely different from my experience as a traveling climber. This trip made me realize how big the barrier to entry can be with climbing and gave me the idea of trying to change that. I thought that opening the sport up to more people would help me to resolve my feelings of conflict."

Beat's travels in 2016 coincided with the pinnacle of the refugee crisis in Europe. "I had thought about going to Turkey to volunteer, but in the end I found an organization in the Lebanese Bekaa Valley that accepted me, so I decided to go there. On the first phone call I told them that I'd like to do something with climbing. I had read up on climbing therapy and I could really relate. Climbing had helped my own mental health and had given my life a new sense of purpose. After working with this NGO in Lebanon, I soon realized that bringing climbing to refugees living in the Bekaa Valley wouldn't be as easy as I first thought. Like today, many refugees didn't have valid papers. This made passing the many military checkpoints on the way to the main climbing spots a risky endeavor."

Today, Lebanon has a population of about 7 million people, and one quarter of that population are refugees mostly from neighboring Syria and Palestine. This makes Lebanon the country with the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide. The worsening of the economic situation has been exacerbated

by the pandemic and has driven large parts of the population into extreme poverty. As a result, child labor and child marriage are on the rise again. Many are suffering from mental disorders such as PTSD, depression, or anxiety without any access to adequate mental health support.

Based on these challenging circumstances faced by refugees and the clear need for healthy activity among the communities in the Bekaa Valley, Beat came up with the idea of having a mobile climbing wall that could move from venue to venue. Rather than bring the refugees to the mountains, why not take the mountain to the valley? Once again, however, this proved easier said than done. "I was

"BEYOND ANY SPECIFIC PROJECT, WE HOPE THAT WE CAN... INSPIRE MORE CLIMBERS TO SHARE THEIR PASSION AND PRIVILEGES WITH THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST."

very naive back then and underestimated how hard it would be to raise the funds. Getting it off the ground while in Lebanon was next to impossible. In the end, I went back to Switzerland and restarted and revamped a bouldering project with asylum seekers at Minimum Bouldering Gym in Zurich. Taking over this project gave me a previously established network of volunteers,



Photo: ClimbiAID

Hula hoop climbing at The ARC in Taanayel, Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

wanted to build everything in Lebanon, but I was unable to find the right vehicle or materials. We built and registered everything in Switzerland and then had it shipped to Lebanon."

Once Beat and his team got the mobile wall to Lebanon and started their program, they wanted to make sure that people could climb in the long term. "If we get someone into climbing, we want to make sure that they can keep climbing. We don't want that opportunity to disappear. In addition to having this mobile wall, we knew we wanted to have a permanent structure as soon as possible." In 2019, ClimbiAID was able to lock down a location where they now carry out the majority of their climbing sessions. "After the explosion in the Beirut harbor, we were given temporary special permission to hold sessions with the mobile wall in the harbor district. It was the right thing to do, because the kids needed an outlet and a way of finding a little joy through those difficult times. We still get people contacting us and asking when we're coming back! Unfortunately, due to COVID and other reasons, we haven't been able to, which is a real bummer. We'd love to have a permanent climbing wall project in Beirut in the future as well."

Despite geopolitical struggles and the challenges presented by COVID, ClimbiAID has remained stable and true to their mission. In Switzerland, the MaXi project now has over 110 volunteers, and some climbing sessions are now run by former participants who came through the program. Beat says the participant base is diverse and that sometimes they have 40-year-olds and 11-year-olds in the same session! Over the last year, COVID and a sudden shortage of international volunteers accelerated efforts by ClimbiAID in Lebanon to build a team of staff and volunteers drawn from the local community. Former ClimbiAID participants have jumped at the opportunity

"Within only a few months, we managed to raise 54,000 Swiss francs (nearly 50,000 euros) for the Lebanon project, which allowed us to buy the vehicle and build it in Switzerland. I had

Annual MaXi Family Boulder Weekend in the Swiss Murg Valley



Photo: ClimbiAID / Adrian Schürmer

to get more involved with the organization and are now frequently helping to run the sessions. Beat and his team have now started arranging workshops for the volunteers so they can take over more responsibilities and learn and grow as facilitators.

Looking to the future, Beat hopes that ClimbAID can secure funding to invest into their growing communities in Switzerland, Lebanon, and Greece. Lebanon's current economic crisis means that the need for safe spaces and psychosocial support is only getting bigger. "We'd really like to have a proper bouldering gym in the Bekaa Valley one day, perhaps combined with a youth center. There's a severe lack of public spaces for young people to express themselves and develop their potential. A corner to sit in with a library, a classroom to teach English and other topics, a workshop with tools for making things like climbing holds and volumes ... Beyond any specific project, we hope that we can keep raising awareness of the refugee cause within the

climbing community and inspire more climbers to share their passion and privilege with those who need it most."

Visit www.climbaid.org to learn more about ClimbAID and their current projects.



BEAT BAGGENSTOS

Born: 1982 in Aarau, Switzerland
Background: Studied Sociology at University of Zurich. Previously worked in Business Development. Founder and Managing Director of ClimbAID.



Mohammad rocking the 2nd Bekaa Bouldering Competition in 2019



Climbing mindfield



MaXi Family Boulder Weekend 2020



Salam sending her project in Qab Elias, Lebanon



@evolv_worldwide



Photo: James E. Mills

CLIMBING FOR CHANGE

A MISSION TO MAKE CLIMBING MORE INCLUSIVE

◆ **Growing up in Fayetteville, North Carolina, Kai always had plenty of uncontained energy and would routinely get in trouble for climbing things. In 2006, at the age of six, he climbed the flagpole at his mom's office, which prompted one of his mom's colleagues to mention that there was a climbing gym in town. She left the gym's address on a sticky note, and after school that very day, Kai's mom took him to the gym. He has been in love with the sport ever since.**

"In climbing there's always a new puzzle to solve. There's always something that captures your attention. I remember standing in front of the wall and thinking of all the sequences I could do. I found other sports more repetitive – they didn't captivate me in the way that climbing did." Kai's gym in Fayetteville had a youth team that he slotted right into, and from there he started doing junior competitions.

As Kai puts it, "Fayetteville isn't exactly a climber town. The west side of North Carolina is pretty mountainous, but Fayetteville is on the east side and it's a flat town. Route setting was haphazard. I think I trained on the same route for Nationals five years in a row." With his mom's support, Kai would regularly travel six hours to Atlanta to train in a better equipped facility.

Kai became a junior national champion before he even had the chance to climb outdoors. "I was completely happy in my gym world, and leaving that was intimidating, but I thought I needed to give it a shot. The first time I climbed outside was at the New River Gorge. What I liked most was just being in nature. It was really calming and transformative."

At 13, as soon as Kai was eligible, he competed in the World Youth Championships in Canada, where he placed fourth. Kai comes from a single parent household, and in the U.S., there is little funding for junior competitors. Families are expected to foot the bill. He remembers flying home from that event and his mom telling him that they might have to cut back on competitions for financial reasons. Fortunately for Kai, he had also climbed his first 8c+ routes that year, and there were people in the industry who had taken notice of his talent and had heard he could do with some extra funding. Days after returning home from the World Championships, he received his first financial sponsorship offers. The timing couldn't have been better because the next World Championships were due to take place in New Caledonia, and he would go on to win.



Photo: James E. Mills

A LACK OF DIVERSITY

Throughout Kai's years of competing at junior level, he was one of few athletes of color. Kai remembers feeling out of place at times walking into a climbing gym or competition being the only black person. He has volunteered with youth groups, adaptive climbing and other DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) initiatives since his high school days. Kai came to realize that, as a professional climber, he had corporate connections that he could make use of to support his grassroots activism and thereby amplify the opportunities for the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) community. Thus, Climbing for Change was born.

As Kai says, "I've kind of inherently become people's go-to person for advice on DEI because I stand out as a black professional climber. With the Black Lives Matter move-

ment, there's been a big push to make climbing more inclusive, and consulting requests have rapidly increased. With Climbing for Change, we are striving to diversify climbing at every level and to offer as many resources as possible by providing grants to individuals. Basically, we're trying to enter spaces that aren't very diverse and we're working to give motivated individuals the resources to make this possible. We do consulting work with major brands in the outdoor industry in order to better allocate funding, and we connect them with the grassroots organizations already doing the work so that they can combine their efforts and have a greater impact. On top of that, we also create programs of our own. We just started a program with the city of College Park and the Atlanta-based Stone Summit climbing gyms in Georgia. In collaboration with Kevin Jorgensen's 1Climb organization, we've built a climbing wall at a recreation center in College Park, and the city has promised transportation from the center to the Stone Summit gyms. Stone Summit has also committed to giving the kids access to their gyms. Our aim is for this program to give participants the opportunity to climb outdoors. I think it's important for people to experience outdoor climbing as well. As human beings, we have innate connections with nature, and the less time we spend in it, the more negatively this impacts our mental health. So, I think we should all have the chance to benefit from access to these spaces."

SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT FOR DEI CLIMBING INITIATIVES

Climbing for Change currently has seven grants set up. These grants create opportunities for people interested in a diverse array of areas within climbing, including expeditions, route setting, competitive climbing, gym to crag, guiding, adventuring outside, and outdoor leadership. "We have tried to provide a grant for every space and hope that we can motivate people to realize their full potential."

Kai came up with the idea of creating Climbing for Change in June 2020, and it was already off the ground the following month. "Behind

the scenes, I was able to gain commitments from my sponsors prior to our launch. The initiative just felt right and necessary. I thought to myself that if it's not me pushing this, then who is? There was a clear disconnect between the organizations trying to secure the funding and the companies that wanted to provide the funding and do the work. These companies didn't know what was happening in their own communities and the roadblocks they were going to encounter. You can't just step into an existing community and do that kind of work. You have to get the community to buy in, and if you don't, your project is likely to fail."

"... ULTIMATELY, CHANGE IS DOWN TO THE ACTION TAKEN BY INDIVIDUALS TO MAKE THE COMMUNITY THAT THEY LIVE IN AND CLIMB IN A MORE ACCEPTING PLACE."

Kai's mom, Connie Lightner, has also been pivotal to Climbing for Change's success. Kai and Connie split the responsibilities and have a group behind them to help with grant applications and social media. On top of running Climbing for Change, Kai is currently a full-time student and Connie a full-time university professor. Kai says that keeping on top of things is a juggling act. "At the end of our grant cycles, it feels like a full-time job."

"When we started Climbing for Change, we were slightly concerned about how trendy it was to work with DEI organizations and the incentives for doing so. People were looking for ways to prove that they supported the Black Lives Matter movement and minority communities. Our fear was that we'd lose funding for further grants and plans if this was just a trend. But luckily, we've had continuous buy-in and interest so far. We'd like to run some more projects like the program we have in Atlanta, but COVID has stalled our plans. Unfortunately, minority communities have been most heavily impacted by COVID spikes."

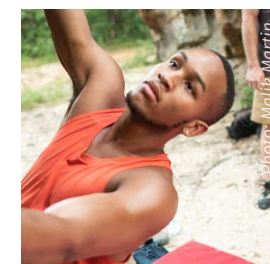


Photo: Keith Martin

Kai Lightner is a professional rock climber who started climbing at the age of six and became the Open/Adult Lead Climbing National Champion at age 15. Throughout his career he has won 12 National Championships (2 adult; 10 youth), 5 Pan American Championships (1 adult; 4 youth), and one Youth World Championship. In the outdoor arena, he is credited with climbing his first 5.14c/8C+, Southern Smoke, at age 13, and Era Vella (5.14d/9a) at age 15. In addition to climbing, Kai is a freelance writer who has always enjoyed working with organizations focused on minority outreach in outdoor spaces. Kai is the founder of the nonprofit organization Climbing for Change, which aims to connect underserved communities with individuals and organizations that seek to increase minority participation in rock climbing and the outdoor adventure industry.

THE VALUE OF ALLIES

Besides the cost of equipment and membership dues – which are considerably higher in the U.S. than in Europe – minorities in the U.S. that are interested in climbing face the additional challenge of entering national parks and other outdoor spaces that haven't always been welcoming to minority visitors. There are even some racist and discriminatory route names. Rural communities, which are where most outdoor climbing is found, also often have a history of being unwelcoming and even threatening. In many states, landowners have the right to shoot trespassers, and with so many crags bordering private land, this presents a further deterrent and danger.

Kai has had to navigate some of these obstacles throughout his time climbing and traveling. He recalls a period from his youth when he and his mom would have to spend extra time planning some of their initial climbing trips. When going to places like the Red River Gorge, they would plan to take gas and food stops in larger cities to avoid having to make a stop in what could be a hostile community where they wouldn't be welcome or could be threatened with violence. "It can be kind of scary when you venture out and you have to worry about an additional set of dangers that most people don't even have to think about."

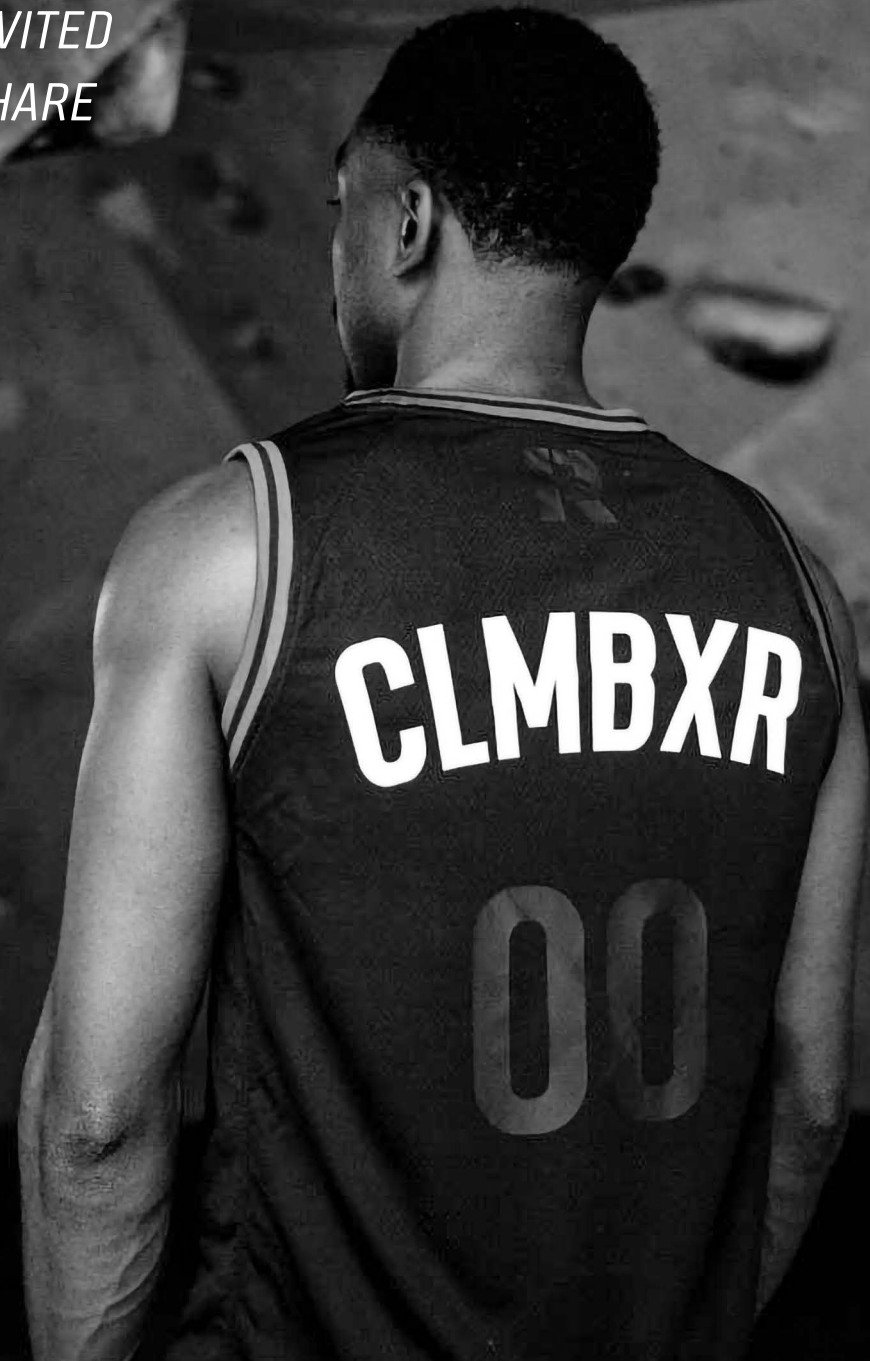
"Initiatives from larger companies can right a lot of wrongs, but ultimately, change is down to the action taken by individuals to make the community that they live in and climb in a more accepting place. Try to be welcoming if you notice people accessing an indoor or outdoor climbing space for the first time. Offer assistance if someone needs help finding a wall or a route. Most importantly, if you have privilege and you see something that isn't right, then use your privilege to intervene." At the end of the day, Kai has come to realize that being an ally is one of the most impactful things that anyone can do and that no individual act is too small.

Visit www.climbing4change.org to learn more about Climbing for Change and its current projects. ◆

CLMBXR

HOW ONE CLIMBER INVITED HIS COMMUNITY TO SHARE IN THE EXPERIENCE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLMBXR



Clmbxr was founded in London in 2019 by local climber Rotimi Odukoya. Rotimi has been a life-long sports enthusiast, and after his first bouldering session at a London gym, he was instantly hooked. He found the gyms and the bouldering scene in London to be friendly and welcoming, but severely lacking in diversity. In Rotimi's words, "With bouldering, I found it cool right away how you could watch other climbers and glean tips and advice and share beta. That doesn't happen with other activities like weightlifting. People are generally more competitive and don't really

like being watched, and, in my experience, they are less likely to interact with others."

THE GROUP

Clmbxr welcomes anyone to its twice weekly group sessions, but primarily aims to give minorities and underserved groups a comfortable space to explore climbing. Clmbxr members receive discounted entry and rental gear at the walls that Clmbxr partners with in London. What started off as a small WhatsApp

group has grown to be over 100 members strong. "I've always been of the mindset that if I want to do something I will do it, regardless of the circumstances. I know that growth comes from putting yourself in potentially uncomfortable situations, and sometimes this means stepping into a place where you're the only black person," says Rotimi. "When we first started showing up as a group at climbing walls, it almost felt like we were making a political statement, but we weren't. We were just friends who climbed together and who happened to be black. That being said, I do

think that visibility is helpful in making climbing more diverse. Seeing someone who looks like you doing an activity will make you want to try it too, and I think that is why people feel comfortable in our Clmbxr community. They say, 'Oh look, there are black people climbing.' That's something that isn't very common at all, so when they see us, it's reassuring because they realize that there isn't an added cultural barrier that you have to overcome in order to try climbing. Anyone who joins our sessions is immediately part of our family."

"SEEING SOMEONE WHO LOOKS LIKE YOU DOING AN ACTIVITY WILL MAKE YOU WANT TO TRY IT TOO ..."

THE FORMULA

Each Clmbxr session starts with a dynamic stretching warm-up. Rotimi gives first-timers a crash course in bouldering basics, talking them through hold types, basic movements, and grades. "Often what happens naturally is that people break into small groups from there and they start trying things out and watching and informally coaching each other," says Rotimi. "We try not to overwhelm people with information when they come for the first time. We don't want people to have decision paralysis! We just try to get people to jump on as many climbs as possible during our one-and-a-half to two-hour sessions. We typically have two to three new climbers per session, and since the group has now been running for almost two years, we have

plenty of competent climbers who are happy to lend a hand to the newcomers." Rotimi and the more advanced members still climb for themselves during each session in between helping out the newcomers. "There's a fine balance between laying a foundation and over-structuring. I think the best way for people to enjoy the experience and to make progress is to be among other people and to learn almost from photosynthesis, if you will," explains Rotimi.

BRAND CAMPAIGNS

Rotimi previously interned in public relations and has been able to partner with brands on campaigns featuring the Clmbxr group. As Rotimi puts it, "We don't have sponsors, but we've been able to capitalize on doing campaigns with brands. We were recently involved in a campaign with Nike. They were looking to do something with sports on the periphery. In each of the brand campaigns we've done to date, it has been the brands that have reached out to us. Looking to the future, we'd like to have more strategic brand partnerships. We'd like them to be long-term relationships where, perhaps, Clmbxr mem-

bers can intern at these companies and have job opportunities."

ON THE HORIZON

The Clmbxr group recently went to the Peak District for its first outdoor trip and would like to continue taking its climbing outdoors. It would also like to explore snow and white water sports. Over the last year, the group has been invited to visit gyms in other major UK cities and, with COVID restrictions easing, hopes to take some of these gyms up on their offers.

Visit www.clmbxr.co.uk to learn more about the Clmbxr community.



ROTIMI ODUKOYA

Born: 1993

Lives in: London, United Kingdom

Background: Founder of Clmbxr, a vibrant community helping black and ethnic communities get into bouldering. Grew up playing tennis and basketball, and fell in love with climbing after being introduced to it at a work social.

ROUTESETTING

AND THE PATH TO PROFESSIONALIZATION

TEXT: PETER ZEIDELHACK & JACKIE HUEFTLE

Peter Zeidelhack is a member of the Executive Board and Director of Routesetting for a company that runs four climbing gyms in the greater Munich area, head of the commercial routesetting training for the DAV, technical advisor to Petzl, a routesetter himself for over 16 years, and a loving husband and father to three girls.

Peter has been climbing since 1991 and setting professionally since around 2004. He spends a lot of his time thinking about routesetting, actually setting, and working towards the future of routesetting and the climbing industry. Find him on Instagram @peterzeidelhack.

Jackie Hueftle has been climbing and setting since 1998. She is doing her best to contribute to the climbing industry's future as part of the CWA Routesetting Committee and through her companies Kilter Grips and the Routesetting Institute. Find her on Instagram @thegirlinlongshorts.



PETER ZEIDELHACK

Born: 1977

Lives in: Munich, Germany

Background: Diploma in sports science, focusing on media and communication



JACKIE HUEFTLE

Born: 1982

Lives in: Boulder, Colorado, United States

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

◆ **When you hear the phrase “professional routesetter”, what comes to mind? Does it sound strange to your ears? Do you think of people who set for membership trade, or as volunteers? Perhaps you think of the people you see joking around in your climbing gym as they put holds on the wall, who seem to spend as much time lying on the floor and messing around as they do actually working. Or maybe your gym has a very organized routesetting program, where setters with full kits, proper safety systems, and PPE cordon off an area and quickly strip and reset huge walls four days a week. Maybe it’s somewhere in between. Whatever you think of, there is bound to be a huge range of ideas about what routesetting looks like in reality because it is still developing alongside the climbing industry – and both are currently undergoing a phase of growth and transformation.**

As the climbing industry as a whole becomes more professional, setting must follow the same path. For example, imagine if the setters at the recent Olympic Games were not skilled. Poor setting could easily have turned the event into a disaster, and misrepresented the sport to the IOC (International Olympic Committee), the media, and the audience. Instead, thanks to professional routesetting, it became a standout new sport, garnered much public and media interest, and made our sport look as interesting and fun as we all know it to be. There are a lot of factors that contribute to the outcome of an event, but having skilled setters behind the scenes stacks the odds more in favor of a good result.

For climbing gyms, the routes and boulders are the product the gym is providing. People come to a climbing gym to climb, and so

the routesetting department needs to provide climbs for individuals of all body types and abilities to warm up on, send, and project. Setters are essentially responsible for helping their climbing population to develop strengths and skills, helping them progress, and making climbing fun. This helps the gym to retain those people as members, which keeps business healthy. Combine this responsibility with safety considerations, skilled tool use, different wall angles, the vast number of holds, macros, and volumes available, and the massive range of potential climbing moves, and it’s clear to see that routesetting is a very complex task.

Luckily the industry is quickly realizing that the routesetting department is a valuable part of a climbing gym and the climbing competition ecosystem, and that routesetters are skilled employees who should be cared for in a way that reflects their ability and commitment to the physically and mentally demanding work of setting routes.

Good setters should be considered as routesetting professionals who act like professionals and are treated like professionals. Ensuring that this is the case is a complicated issue, but for us as an industry to start heading in this direction, there are several basic requirements that must be met:

1. APPROPRIATE PAY

Setting requires experience, practice, judgment, and skill. Setters are literally creating the product the gym is selling. They should therefore be paid as skilled employees and receive benefits like health care, preventative health care, and paid time off.

2. REASONABLE SCHEDULES

Routesetting is both mentally and physically challenging. Between rope and ladder work, hauling, tool use, and forerunning, a 40-hour work week can quickly take its toll on setters’ bodies. Gyms that force setting quotas can be even worse, as setters might be expected to strip, set, and forerun hundreds of feet of climbs in a day – and repeat this multiple days a week. Setters can be taught to be efficient, but unreasonable deadlines or quotas will result in poor-quality products and chronically injured employees. Setting schedules must be reasonable and keep employees’ physical and mental health in mind. Usually, it is not sustainable to set more than three days per week. This creates a problem because full-time employment usually requires four to five days of work. To solve this, many gyms include additional tasks in a setter’s job profile, such as coaching teams, teaching setting, and performing administrative and/or other gym tasks, thus increasing setters’ hours and turning their jobs into wholesome, full-time positions.

3. SAFETY

Setters should be trained in worker safety. This will help to protect them as well as their venue of employment. This means that they should take classes in and adhere to work at height regulations or similar standards, practice with redundant rope systems, and be provided with appropriate tools, PPE, hardware, rigging equipment, and safety equipment so they can set up and use those systems. It also means giving them enough time and space in the gym to do their job according to those standards, which means the gym will need to provide fencing or cordoning equipment and close off walls or floors as needed.

4. TRAINING

Climbing is technical by nature, and so setting must be as well. Training sessions and clinics on setting, setter exchanges, and setting for competitions all give setters opportunities to learn, which will help them to improve their own skills and raise overall setting standards at their home gyms. Organizations, as well as freelance setters and coaches, are now available in many countries to teach clinics. The need for these clinics will continue to grow as more gyms understand the value of investing in setter training and utilizing the skills and experience of other setters to improve the output of their own setting teams.

5. MANAGEMENT & PROGRESSION STRUCTURE

Routesetting programs need a management structure that integrates the program with the rest of the gym. This means that managers need to balance the overall needs of the gym with the health, safety, and function of the setters in the setting program.

The program manager should be a head setter. If there is a multi-gym chain, this head setter may have a regional and/or national director overseeing them. All of these individuals should receive management training and the applicable safety training so they can properly assist and oversee their teams.

In addition, management teams should provide their setting teams with the tools, training, and support they need to do their jobs. They are the ones responsible for supporting their teams when it comes to securing these necessary resources.

“ I THINK PROFESSIONALIZATION IS IMPORTANT, AS ROUTESETTERS ARE AS IMPORTANT TO CLIMBING AS CHEFS ARE TO A RESTAURANT.” SHI HUI

Under the management team is the routesetting team, which may consist of an assistant head setter or crew supervisor, the resident routesetters, apprentice routesetters, and possibly interns. The setting program may also have a separate wall maintenance team, stripping team, and/or washing team.

6. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

Routesetters need to be given resources and training to make them an integrated part of the team. For their part, setters must act professionally, both at work and when not at work. Setters represent themselves and the climbing gym and should act accordingly if they want to be taken seriously and respected.

7. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Though these basic requirements are becoming more universal, there is still a way to go until they are firmly established within a

career path, complete with education and skill checklists. The good news is that setters in different communities around the world have been working on documents and programs with a view to professionalize routesetting as a career, and teaming up to create an international network of setters whose aim is to carve out this universal career development path, which so many have desired for so long.

These programs are based on both association-based and independent efforts. Association-based work is more formal, generally organized by a national or international organization and focused on creating or improving standards and granting certifications, while independent efforts stem from individuals or small groups who travel from gym to gym to set and teach courses. Both types of programs will help to forge connections between climbing gyms and encourage the sharing of ideas and theories between gyms and communities.

Another key issue when it comes to professionalizing routesetting is ensuring a diverse setting crew. Women and other minority groups have long been underrepresented in routesetting and in climbing as a whole. With the massive growth our sport has seen of late, this has been rapidly changing, and it is now becoming increasingly common to see setters of different genders and ethnic backgrounds in gyms. Representation must go hand in hand with professionalization as our sport matures.



Julius Kerscher preparing to start setting

Below are some examples of existing programs and individual efforts from all around the world that will hopefully be incorporated into a future universal plan for professionalizing routesetting. Each of these programs has the same goal – to enable routesetters to create a safe and fun infrastructure using appropriate workplace safety methods. Several countries not mentioned below do not yet have fully developed programs, but are hoping to implement them in the future.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SPORT CLIMBING (IFSC)

The IFSC has a competition-setting accreditation program that certifies setters from around the world to set at World Cups and other international or continental events. The IFSC works with national governing bodies to give more setters opportunities to set at and learn from IFSC events. The IFSC worked closely with the International Olympic Committee to incorporate climbing into the Olympics, and all Olympic setters are also IFSC setters.

Setters Jan Zbrank from Czech Republic and Adam Pustelnik from Poland are both IFSC Chief and Olympic setters. They worked with IFSC Europe and a team of setters to develop a continental-level routesetting course and are currently working on a dual-track training system that shows progression paths for commercial and competition setters, both based on the same foundation of training. This program is receiving funding from the European Union.

FRANCE

Two years ago, the French Federation of Mountaineering and Climbing (FFME) launched a program with a certified professional qualification to become a qualified climbing equipment technician, mainly focusing on:

- Working at height: maneuvering on fixed ropes, rescuing another routesetter, adapting techniques to different supports and situations
- Driving an elevated platform in a routesetting and maintenance situation
- Ensuring first-level maintenance of an artificial climbing wall
- Setting bouldering and lead routes adapted to specifications

As a country, France has long been a climbing hub, from producing many of the early climbing walls and creating new climbing wall tech-



Sarah Filler teaching at Stone Climbing

Photo: Tori Ray



Photo: Tom Lindinger

Julius Kerscher - appropriate PPE for boulder setting

nology to its history of excellent competitive climbers and setters, who can be accredited with shaping many trends in setting. Two of the most influential French setters are Laurent Laporte (IFSC setter and owner of Cheeta Holds) and Jacky Godoffe (long-time IFSC setter and author of "My Keys to Route Setting"). A universal plan for professionalizing route-setting will not work without the support of these and other legendary setters.

France is also home to renowned international female setter Hélène Janicot and several outstanding national-level female setters. According to Jacky Godoffe, the country is seeing more and more women becoming interested in setting and more and more commercial gyms trying to get women onto their setting teams.

GERMANY

The German Alpine Club (DAV) is responsible for Halls & Walls, an annual two-day event focusing on the climbing gym industry and everything that is important to it, including lots of routesetting, of course. This year, the event, which will focus on routesetting, will be hosted in the context of a larger trade fair called Vertical Pro. The DAV has also been implementing a competition-setting training program for many years, adding a commercial routesetting program to its agenda in 2011.

Mountaineering association Bergsportfachverband Bayern des DAV e.V. (BFB) recently developed a program similar to the IFSC dual-track training system, consisting of a two-day course on the basics of routesetting, focusing on standards, tools and materials, safe assembly of climbing infrastructure and how to create basic climbing movements; a two-day course mainly focusing on rope techniques for setting; and another two-day course focusing on movement in a bouldering context.

Peter Zeidelhack of the DAV has been responsible for the DAV's commercial routesetting training program for almost ten years now. His curriculum has been proven to quickly get setters up to speed with the latest and best practices for working at height on climbing walls and the basics of commercial routesetting. He also runs the two-day courses offered by the BFB together with long-time head setters Julius Kerscher and Christoph Gabrys. Peter regularly talks to many different setters and program organizers around the world with the aim of pulling everyone together to create a universal plan for professionalizing routesetting.

A German group called the Routesetting Symposium is focused on creating more diversity in routesetting, for example through events, workshops, talks, and podium discussions on routesetting and/or diversity-related topics for FINTA* folk (female, intersectional, non-bi-

nary, trans, and agender). It is also working to help gym owners and managers understand which steps they can take to create a more welcoming environment for these traditionally underrepresented groups to achieve the work opportunities and diversity the industry is clamoring for.

The goals of the Routesetting Symposium are to:

- Reduce barriers impeding entry into route-setting for FINTA* folk
- Provide further training
- Contribute to empowerment and networking through a high-profile annual three-day event and supporting individual events
- Raise awareness, represent, and strengthen the visibility of FINTA* routesetters.
- Promote long-term, sustainable changes in the ongoing professionalization of routesetting

UNITED KINGDOM

Nate McMullan founded the Route Setting Association (RSA) over ten years ago and has followed a similar path to the DAV in professionalizing the craft of routesetting.

The objectives of the Route Setting Association are to:

- Raise the standard of safety and quality in routesetting across the climbing wall industry
- Enhance the safety of routesetters working on climbing walls
- Enhance the safety and enjoyment of climbing wall customers
- Help protect the climbing wall industry and routesetters from potential litigation by dispersing best practice and safety information
- Work with climbing wall and routesetting experts in an open and cooperative manner to promote best practice across the industry and thereby help drive participation in the sport
- Highlight the pivotal role of routesetters and their skills in the industry by increasing public awareness of the trade

In terms of female representation and diversification in the United Kingdom, the Women's Climbing Symposium carries out activities such as women's routesetting clinics, while strong female climbers from the UK such as Leah Crane and Shauna Coxsey, set at high-profile events and teach setting clinics

to try and get more women and underrepresented groups into the profession.

Impact Routesetting is another group based in the UK that sets and teaches clinics around the country.

AUSTRIA

The Austrian Alpine Club (ÖAV) offers licensed commercial routesetting courses, consisting of two levels (four days each) which build upon one another: first boulder setting and then routesetting. Participants can then decide whether to join the competition setting scheme.

NORTH AMERICA

USA Climbing, the national governing body for climbing in the United States, has its own system of clinics and certification levels designed to prepare setters for setting at USA Climbing events. Some of these setters have even progressed to become IFSC setters. USA Climbing works closely with Climbing Escalade Canada (CEC) to hold events and share information.

CEC has an IFSC setter in Kaleb Thomas and has been working to improve its competition program to better support its athletes. Canada has hosted several World Cups and, though it is not a stop on the current tour, hopefully it will be again soon. Regarding diversity, there are many female leaders in the climbing industry in Canada, including several gym owners and long-time coach and setter Heather Reynolds, while the B.I.G. Initiative is a clinic series designed to get more women into routesetting.

The Climbing Wall Association (CWA) Routesetting Committee is a group of professional setters who have been meeting bi-monthly for over 18 months and are actively working to develop a commercial path and further resources for setters and gyms hoping to professionalize their setting programs. The Routesetting Committee is international and will work with the IFSC, the DAV, USA Climbing, the RSA, and others on a universal plan for professionalizing routesetting. The CWA also created a work at height training program with climbing gear manufacturer Petzl and incorporates routesetting into its annual summit and meet-up events with setting clinics, workshops, talks, and symposiums – all with the goal of improving setter professionalization across the industry.

Several independent setting/consulting groups and individuals work out of North America, including, but by no means limited to, the Routesetting Institute (with events held by Sarah Filler, Jackie Hueftle, Jeremy Ho, TJ Sanford, and more), Tonde Katiyo (who holds well-regarded clinics), Louie Anderson (who holds Setter Showdown events), and Thread Climbing (run by IFSC setter Chris Danielson and Brad Weaver). Several large gym chains have their own programs in place. There are also many local setters who teach clinics for their own gym's setting programs or introduce interested parties to setting.

The US has held several women-focused events, including clinics and competitions at the annual Womxn Up competition held by Touchstone (featured in issue #3 of Route Setter Magazine), designed to create an inclusive space for women and underrepresented groups in setting.

"... QUALIFICATION FROM DAY ONE ON IN A MODULAR SYSTEM IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS PROFESSIONALIZATION."
JULIUS KERSCHER

SPAIN

Spain has a long history of IFSC Chief routesetters, and the certification program for competition setting by the Spanish Federation for Mountain and Climbing Sports (FEDME) has been active for quite some time. Setters Carlos Catari, Sergio Verdasco, and others have also been working towards professionalizing setting in a commercial context under the roof of the FEDME, and are keen and waiting to collaborate with others from the climbing community on an international scale. Carlos has also been running commercial routesetting training in Spain for a couple of years through his company all4climbing.

SLOVENIA

The Alpine Association of Slovenia (PZS) runs a course for setting at Slovenian national competitions. It lasts for up to two months, following which participants must work as an assistant at some events before being licensed. All other training is through work experience.

Slovenia is home to the IFSC's highest-level female setter for bouldering, Katja Vidmar. Katja was previously a World Cup competitor and coach, and she also owns and runs 360 Holds and its manufacturing company.

SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) only offers three-day courses to become a regional and/or national setter for competitions at present. There is no commercial training program for the time being, but the need for such a program is clear, according to Markus Senn, Director of Routesetting for the Gaswerk gyms in and around Zurich.

ITALY

Similarly to Slovenia and Switzerland, Italy runs a program for competition routesetting, but not yet for commercial routesetting.

JAPAN

As the host of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, and with one of the strongest national climbing teams in the world, Japan clearly takes routesetting seriously. However, the only training program offered by the Japanese Mountaineering and Sport Climbing Association (JSMCA) as of now is for competition routesetting, with no commercial routesetting training programs in the pipeline.

IFSC setter Hiroshi Okano started running commercial routesetting training around ten years ago through his company, Proset.

AUSTRALIA

As of now there is no designated program for training routesetters in commercial settings within the state and national bodies in Australia. There is a structure in place for developing competition setting in state and national competitions, but no related training programs.

These are just some examples of programs and individual efforts. As efforts to create a universal plan for professionalizing routesetting start to take hold, getting more countries involved will be key to making something truly universal that works for everyone and forging a path forward for our industry as a whole.

BUT DO WE ACTUALLY NEED TO PROFESSIONALIZE ROUTESSETTING?

HERE IS WHAT SOME INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT IT:

“Many years ago I fell in love with the beautiful activity of routesetting. I was really passionate about this game with holds and soon I came across a thought: What if climbing became so popular around the world that I could set routes for a living?”



Jan Zbranek

Jan Zbranek,
IFSC chief routesetter, owner and shaper of Moveholds, Czech Republic

“I think professionalization is important, as routesetters are as important to climbing as chefs are to a restaurant. Gyms need to take setting more seriously and pay a good rate for setters so that it is sustainable for them.”



Shihui Tan

Shihui Tan,
Gym owner and setter, Singapore

“We need to professionalize routesetting to make it a legitimate job – a respectable career choice that provides setters with livable wages and benefits. Setters create the gym’s product, and professionalizing our job will help to show our importance to the indoor climbing industry and create better working conditions and more support for routesetters.”

Sarah Filler,
Routesetting Institute instructor & setter, USA

“Teaching routesetting is something that has a lot of challenges. Sure, you can teach someone how to use a drill and some do’s and don’ts, but to actually have someone emerge as a good setter it needs to almost be an apprenticeship. Years of on-the-job learning with good mentors. I think it’s well overdue that setting becomes viewed as a ‘real’ profession, but there are difficulties with that, like the limited days per week people can physically set for. Personally, I don’t want our setters working more than two to three days a week.”



Jack Masel

Jack Masel,
Director of routesetting at 9 Degrees, Australia

“For me personally, routesetting is an underrated profession in climbing. But I must say that we are definitely in a better place compared to maybe ten years ago. As the community grows, there is more interest in routesetting and this opens up more demand for training programs and welfare.”



Mohd Irwan

Mohd Irwan,
Head setter at BFF Climb and founder of Griplines, Singapore



Sarah Filler

“As the indoor climbing gym industry has grown over the last 30 years, so too has the importance of routesetting. The improvements in the techniques and practices of routesetting need to be documented in order to educate new routesetters and gym owners alike. An amazing group of routesetting professionals has convened with the CWA to help document the current best practices. It is our hope that access to education and industry-wide knowledge will help improve the accessibility of routesetting to new professionals of diverse backgrounds, raise the quality of work that setters do, and continue to elevate the recognition of the vital role setters play in a climbing business.”



Garnet Moore

Garnet Moore,
Director of Operations at the Climbing Wall Association, USA

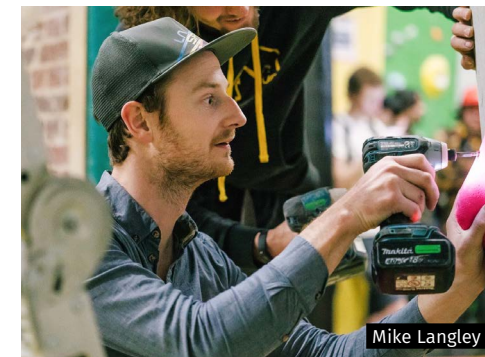
“I think as we move into the post-Olympics era we need to see more structure and availability to training and development. As more gyms open up we need something like that here for sure. Develop more talent and give more opportunities with structure and professionalism. Let’s hope there is some motivation to do this in the future.”



William Watkins

William Watkins,
Routesetter, owner and hold shaper of Unleashed Climbing, Australia

“Currently, ‘routesetter’ is a wide-ranging term. It could mean a psyched local climber picking up a drill once a month or a full-time setter with 20 years’ experience leading a team. We need to find a standardized way of representing people’s setting experience and ability if we want to professionalize the industry. This is not an easy task given the huge creative element in setting. The goal should be to create a structure of qualifications not solely focused on comp setting (as some existing structures do), but with an emphasis on commercial gym setting too. It would allow the industry to create a career pathway with equal opportunities, encourage fair pay banding, recognize differences in setting talent, facilitate apprenticeship schemes, and most importantly aid setters in driving vital conversations between themselves and business owners – what does it really mean to be a professional ‘routesetter’?”



Mike Langley

Mike Langley,
Director of routesetting at The Castle, United Kingdom

“Professionalization in the sense that one can live sustainably from routesetting is questionable. This requires professional models, with alternative roles to physically burdensome ones that can be fulfilled in the long term, and adequate remuneration. Not every routesetter has to or wants to become a professional in this sense. But what we all have to do is apply professional standards of work safety and assembly from established industries – since physics doesn’t care who is assembling at height and why. Paradigm shift: Nice moves are important, but they’re just the topping on the cake. From day one, we are fitters of systems that will endanger people if incorrectly assembled. That is why qualification from day one on in a modular system is the most important step towards professionalization.”



Julius Kerscher

Julius Kerscher,
Head setter at the Technical University of Munich, Germany

“We need to give more energy to the development of the routesetting industry and try to spread the value of our job to the gym, the people and the climbing society.”



Hiroshi Okano

Hiroshi Okano,
IFSC chief routesetter, owner and shaper of Proset Climbing Hold, Japan

CONCLUSION AND A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

On a global scale, routesetting training at all levels still mostly consists of in-house programs at gyms or gym chains, if it exists at all. Some national programs are in place, but many are still young and in development. It is clear that there is a desire for professionalization, and an international approach to developing a universal career pathway – a universal plan – is the future. As an industry, we want and need a defined path, from novice to skilled setter who meets all of the requirements to set in a commercial environment, the competition world, or both. We want and need a way to make a living doing what we love at the highest level – maybe even one day setting the Olympic Games. This is the dream, and with international cooperation we can seize these opportunities to turn our work into a true profession.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

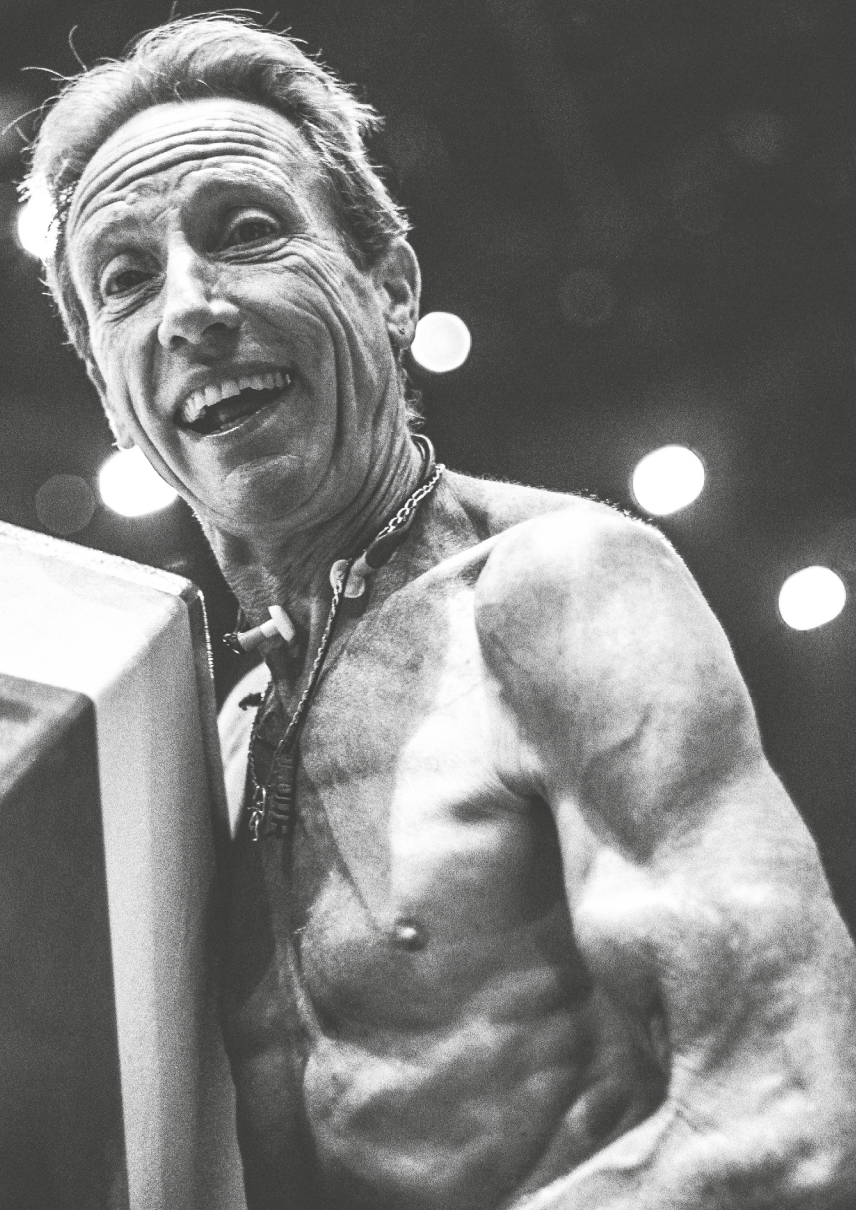
- Talk to your gym about safety training if your crew hasn’t had any yet. Find certification courses through your national organization

or reach out to an international instructor if no one in your country provides work at height training.

- Join online setting communities to stay up to date on standards and trends in routesetting. Instagram has many great setting videos and movement analysis videos from thought leaders like Udo Neumann (@_udini_). Facebook has several active groups including Routesetters Anonymous, Routesetting Safety, and Womxn Routesetters (for women and underrepresented genders).
- Listen to podcasts and read setting books, web articles, and magazines like this one to stay up to date on current thoughts and theory regarding setting.
- Reach out to your national organization and express your support for professionalizing routesetting. Encourage them to get involved in the universal plan.
- And finally, ask around to see what you can do to be more involved in your country’s efforts to professionalize routesetting. Learn what’s out there and then add to it by teaching clinics, doing setter exchanges, reaching out to other setters, and raising awareness of new standards and ideas – this will help to move our whole industry forward! 📌

JACKY GODOFFE. THE G.F.O.S.

INTERVIEW: CODY ROTH



Route setting in Bercy for the World Championships in 2016.

Photo: Marc Daviet

◆ **Jacky Godoffe:** most would agree that he's the Godfather of Setting. All you have to do to be amazed is look at the consistency and longevity of his route setting career. And hats off to him – competitive route setting and climbing are forever indebted to his over 30 years of service to the industry. His awareness of movement, his creativity when it comes to choreography, and his desire to push the limits and take risks have largely made the sport what it is today. *Route Setter Magazine* recently caught up with Jacky, who was kind enough to share some of his experiences and thoughts on route setting with us.

RSM: Jacky, the internet is full of conflicting reports about your age! Can you tell us when and where you were born, a little bit about your childhood, and how you were introduced to climbing?

Jacky: Unless anything has changed since then – and I don't think it has – I was born on November 21, 1956 in the French town of Melun near the Fontainebleau forest. I was a nightmare for my parents because I had so much energy in every sense of the word. I spent all of my childhood in the forest because my parents would take me and my brother there to try and tire us out. But it was not until 20 years later that a

◆ **Lorsqu'il est question de Jacky Godoffe, la plupart des gens s'accordent à dire qu'il est « THE Godfather of Setting ». Quand on voit la constance et la longévité de sa carrière d'ouvreur, on ne peut que s'émerveiller et dire chapeau ! La compétition et l'escalade sont à jamais redevables à ses plus de 30 ans de service dans le métier. Sa connaissance du mouvement, sa créativité en matière de chorégraphie et sa volonté de repousser les limites et de prendre des risques ont largement contribué à faire de ce sport ce qu'il est aujourd'hui. RSM a récemment rencontré Jacky, qui a eu la gentillesse de partager avec nous certaines de ses expériences et de ses réflexions sur la vocation d'ouvreur.**

RSM: Jacky, si on regarde sur internet, il y a des rapports contradictoires sur votre âge ! Pouvez-vous nous dire quand et où vous êtes né, quelques mots sur votre enfance et comment vous avez été initié à l'escalade ?

Jacky: Si rien n'a changé depuis – mais je ne crois pas ! – je suis né le 21 novembre 1956 à Melun, tout près de la forêt de Fontainebleau. J'ai été un cauchemar pour mes parents tellement j'avais de l'énergie

friend I was making music with suggested I try out climbing. I then discovered an incredible world, and it was love at first sight. Within the space of six months, I went from being a beginner to a total addict. As I had done gymnastics before, I was particularly strong physically compared with the climbers of that time. I think I was in the right place at the right time.

RSM: When I started climbing in around 1995, there was an American movie where you beat Hans Florine at speed climbing at the Rock Master in Arco. Were you a competitor before being a route setter?

Jacky: I had the opportunity to participate in the first competitions in climbing history, first in Russia and then in Europe, and it was very exciting. Mentally I think I was able to climb at 150% of my ability and that is the ultimate weapon to have under your belt for competitions, as long as you also have the necessary physical and technical ability. When climbing competitions first started, some competitors were probably better climbers than me, but mentally they were less solid. So I did pretty well in those competitions. They were so much less stressful than the gymnastics competitions I had been part of in the past.

With the speed race against Hans Florine at the Rock Master in Arco, it was funny that I was climbing so fast when I hadn't trained for it at all. It was just my style to take risks and climb fast. The year I beat him he had worked especially hard on his speed to beat me, since I had won all of the previous competitions at Arco. He was definitely faster than me. But he didn't win.

When I stopped competing in 1991, I was second in the overall World Cup in Lead, but I really wanted to just focus on bouldering to stretch my limits, because I felt I had the ability and above all the desire. I was a teacher at that time and I got my diploma to become a trainer with the French climbing federation (FFME), which was starting to structure climbing as a real sport. The challenge was very motivating. Route setting brought together different aspects of my career path, such as movement, improvisation, and sharing knowledge.

The FFME suggested that I try out route setting and I learned in the field. It was not very easy at the beginning to go from competitor to route setter, and I had many failures before slowly understanding how to work. I still feel like I'm learning even 30 years down the line.

RSM: What was your goal or ambition when you started route setting?

Jacky: I guess I've always liked to stretch my limits and explore new horizons, and this was a fantastic playground in which to discover and evolve. On the other hand, I had so much to learn. A bit like in music, part of it is knowing the scales and part of it is improvising. I wasn't that good at scales, I guess, but I was great at improvising in the moment. When I speak about scales, I mean that I was missing some skills, especially in manipulating materials and doing other things. I worked with my qualities and with my limits, which I still try to push today.

RSM: What was the climbing scene like when you started route setting? Was route setting taken seriously at the beginning of your career?

dans tous les sens. J'ai fréquenté la forêt toute mon enfance car ils nous y emmenaient avec mon frère, pour essayer de nous fatiguer. Pourtant ce n'est que vingt ans plus tard qu'un ami avec lequel je faisais de la musique m'a proposé de grimper. J'ai alors découvert un monde incroyable et ça a été le coup de foudre. Je suis passé en six mois de débutant à totalement accro. Comme j'avais fait de la gymnastique avant, j'étais particulièrement fort physiquement comparé aux grimpeurs de cette époque. J'étais au bon endroit au bon moment, je crois.

RSM: Je me souviens que, quand j'ai commencé à grimper vers 1995, il y avait un film américain dans lequel vous battiez Hans Florine en escalade de vitesse à l'Arco Rock Master ! Faisiez-vous de la compétition avant d'être ouvrier de voies ?

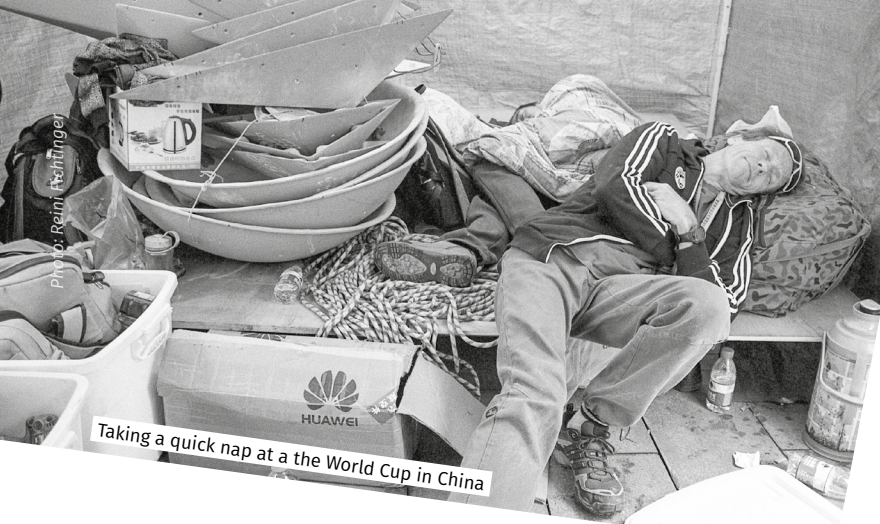
Jacky: J'ai eu la chance de participer aux premières compétitions de l'histoire en Russie d'abord, puis en Europe et c'était super excitant. Mentalement, je crois que j'étais capable de grimper à 150 % de mes capacités et c'est l'arme absolue pour performer en compétition, pour autant qu'on ait aussi les capacités physiques et techniques minimum. Et au début des compétitions, certains compétiteurs étaient sans doute meilleurs grimpeurs que moi mais, mentalement, ils étaient friables. Donc je réussissais plutôt bien en compétitions. C'était tellement moins stressant que celles de gymnastique.

La vitesse avec Hans Florine, c'était drôle que je grimpe si vite alors que je ne m'entraînais pas du tout pour ça. C'était juste mon style de prendre des risques et de grimper vite. L'année où je l'ai battu, il s'était entraîné spécialement en vitesse pour me battre, comme je gagnais tous les ans la compétition d'Arco. Il était sans aucun doute plus rapide que moi. Mais il n'a pas gagné.

Quand j'ai arrêté les compétitions en 1991, j'étais deuxième de la Coupe du monde de lead et j'avais très envie de ne faire que du bloc pour pousser au maximum, car je sentais bien que j'avais les moyens et surtout l'envie. J'étais prof à cette époque et j'ai passé un diplôme pour devenir entraîneur à la Fédération française (FFME) qui commençait à se structurer comme un vrai sport. Le challenge était très motivant. L'ouverture est venue concrétiser différents aspects de mon parcours, la recherche du mouvement, l'improvisation et le partage. La FFME m'a proposé de prendre en charge ce secteur et j'ai appris sur le terrain. Pas si facile d'ailleurs au début, de passer de compétiteur à ouvrier, et il a fallu que j'aie bien des échecs, avant de comprendre petit à petit comment fonctionner. D'ailleurs, j'ai encore l'impression d'apprendre, même 30 ans plus tard.

RSM: Quel était votre objectif ou votre ambition quand vous avez commencé à ouvrir ?

Jacky: Je crois que j'ai toujours aimé pousser les curseurs, explorer de nouveaux horizons et c'était un fantastique terrain de jeu à découvrir et à faire évoluer. D'un autre côté, j'avais tellement de choses à apprendre. Un peu comme en musique, il y a d'une part des gammes à connaître et puis une part d'improvisation. Je n'étais pas si bon que ça pour les gammes, je pense, mais par contre j'avais une grande capacité à improviser en live. Quand je parle des gammes, je veux dire que je manquais de qualités notamment pour les manipulations de matériel et autres bricolages. J'ai fait avec mes qualités et aussi avec mes limites, que j'essaie de repousser encore aujourd'hui.



RSM: Pouvez-vous décrire comment c'était à l'époque où vous avez commencé à ouvrir ? L'ouverture était-elle prise au sérieux, au début de votre carrière ?

Jacky: Honnêtement, c'était un peu sauvage, il fallait la plupart du temps s'adapter à des contraintes très fortes de temps, de matériel. Ce n'était pas professionnel mais tellement excitant. On a eu la chance de pouvoir faire beaucoup d'erreurs et de rebondir avec des solutions nouvelles en s'amusant. On s'amusait tellement. Il y avait tout à écrire, les règles, les limites. C'était souvent très borderline car on avait toujours très peu de temps. Alors on se donnait à fond jour et nuit. Heureusement, tout ça a évolué dans le bon sens.

RSM: Y a-t-il des compétitions ou des moments spécifiques de la mise en route qui vous ont vraiment marqué ?

Jacky: Chaque moment est particulier en ouverture au plus haut niveau, parce que, même si tu décides du terrain de jeu et si tu essaies de définir un scénario avec ton équipe, tu ne sais jamais comment ça va tourner réellement.

J'ai connu un des plus forts moments sur le plan de l'ascenseur émotionnel aux Championnats du monde à Munich en 2005. Pourtant, ça semblait tellement mal parti : un circuit de bloc un peu facile en finale, les grimpeurs les uns après les autres sortaient les blocs. La finale se déroulait alors en circuit, comme une demi-finale aujourd'hui, avec 6 blocs et 20 compétiteurs.

Après le cinquième bloc, il nous restait quelques minutes pour tenter quelque chose et éviter d'avoir au moins quatre ex-aequo à la première place. Avec Laurent, on a décidé de modifier le dernier bloc pour le rendre plus difficile. Je me souviens encore de nos doutes quand on a tourné une prise. On avait bien essayé des options, pendant l'ouverture, mais pas celle-ci. Et puis encore des doutes, quand aucun des concurrents ne pouvait pas passer ce crux. Jusqu'à l'arrivée de Salavat Rakhmetov qui flashe ce dernier bloc, remporte le championnat du monde, dernière compétition de sa carrière, ovationné par la foule. Et l'organisateur de nous féliciter de ce fantastique scénario ! Un grand moment, une grande prise de risque. Pas parfait, loin de là, mais on a tiré le meilleur de nos imperfections, sans lâcher l'affaire. Inoubliable.

RSM: Quels grimpeurs vous ont laissé la plus forte impression ?

Jacky: J'ai toujours été davantage influencé par la fantastique diversité de l'escalade que par des grimpeurs particuliers. Dès mes premiers pas, j'ai senti que je pourrais développer un truc unique à travers l'escalade. Je n'avais envie de ressembler à personne. J'ai eu la chance de partager des moments de vie avec quelques-uns des plus inspirants. Je crois bien qu'ils avaient également cette même envie. Il y a quand même quelques météorites qui m'ont bien inspiré par leur singularité. Elie Chevieux par exemple ou plus près de nous David Lama ou encore douloureusement plus proche Luce Douady.



Jacky: Honestly it was a bit wild; most of the time you had to adapt to very challenging constraints in terms of time and materials. It was not professional, but it was really exciting. We were able to make a lot of mistakes and bounce back with new solutions, all while having fun. We had so much fun. We had to write everything from scratch... rules, limits. It was often very borderline because we always had very little time, so we gave it our all, day and night. Fortunately it all worked out well.

RSM: Are there any competitions or specific moments in route setting that really stand out to you?

Jacky: Every moment stands out when you're route setting at the highest level, because even if you decide on the terrain and try to define a scenario with your team, you never know how it will really turn out.

I had one of my most emotional moments at the World Championships in Munich in 2005. The bouldering final didn't start well. The route we had set was a bit too easy and the climbers, one after the other, topped the first few boulders. The final therefore resembled what would be a semi-final today, with 6 boulders and 20 competitors. After the fifth boulder, we had a few minutes to try to work something out and avoid having four ties for first place. Together with Laurent Laporte, we decided to modify the last boulder to make it more difficult. I still remember our doubts when we turned a hold. We had tried some options while setting, but not this one. And those doubts then resurfaced when none of the competitors could pass this crux. Then along came Salavat Rakhmetov, who smashed this last boulder and won the World Championships, the last competition of his career. He received a standing ovation from the crowd, and the organizer congratulated us for this fantastic scenario. A great moment made possible by some big risk-taking. Not perfect by any means, but we made the most out of our imperfections and didn't give up. Unforgettable.

RSM: Which climbers have left the greatest impression on you?

Jacky: I have always been influenced more by the fantastic diversity of climbing than by particular climbers. From my first taste of the sport I felt like I could create something unique through climbing. I didn't want to be like anyone else. I've had the chance to share life moments with some of the most inspiring people. I think that was also what they wanted. But there are some stars who have really inspired me with their uniqueness. Elie Chevieux, for example, or closer to home, David Lama, or even

painfully closer to home, Luce Douady.

RSM: Any route setter who has trained for long enough knows that there will inevitably be a competition that does not go as planned. What advice can you give to other route setters?

Jacky: I would tend to say that a competition rarely goes as planned. You can't predict what the other climbers will do exactly in that hour on that day. I think that the scenario is created to leave room for fate on the day of the competition. I don't believe for a second that you are in total control of things. Most often the best moments are the result of a combination of factors. Route setting is a part of it, but it's not the only factor. We have to learn from everything that happens, positive or negative.

An anecdote that comes to mind is that, in the first climbing competitions, I was sent as a kind of messiah to the four corners of the world and all the locals believed that my presence alone would guarantee a fantastic competition. Sometimes I even believed it myself. The experience clearly showed the limits of this way of working and the importance of working as a united team that can face the good and the bad times.

RSM: Apart from competitions, do you also do commercial route setting?

Jacky: Honestly I don't do commercial setting, although I've sometimes participated in some commercial setting during workshops. I'm not sure that there is much difference except in terms of the end goal. For me the question is always the same when setting: Have we achieved our target and our objectives?

It is without a doubt the opportunities I've had throughout my career that have enabled me to develop an almost one-of-a-kind laboratory in Fontainebleau. I've never had to worry about finding a job, because it was my job to create all of these experiences. Every day I'm thankful for the opportunities I've had and still have today.

RSM: Are there things you miss from the early days of climbing and route setting?

Jacky: Nothing has changed except that my body is less and less amenable to the whims of my mind. We have always thought and continue to think about how to make the playing field different, attractive, surprising, emotional. We are evolving in a constantly transforming universe and we are lucky to be able to shine the spotlight on climbers through our work behind the scenes, from the shadows.

RSM: In the past, there was perhaps more emphasis on a person having to be an exceptional climber to be taken seriously or get the chance to be a route setter. Do you think this has become less relevant? How important do you think a person's climbing ability is in relation to their setting ability?

Jacky: While it is true that an exceptional climber

RSM: Tout ouvrier d'itinéraire qui a pratiqué assez longtemps sait qu'il y aura inévitablement une compétition qui ne se déroulera pas comme prévu. Quels conseils pouvez-vous donner aux autres ouvriers de route ?

Jacky: J'aurais tendance à dire qu'une compétition se déroule rarement comme prévu ! D'ailleurs, comment serait-il possible de prévoir ce que les grimpeurs vont faire exactement le jour J à l'heure H ? Je crois plutôt qu'on définit le terrain de jeu pour laisser aussi la place à la manière dont les planètes seront alignées le jour de la compétition. Je ne crois pas un seul instant au total contrôle des choses. Le plus souvent, les meilleurs moments sont le résultat d'une combinaison de facteurs. L'ouverture en est une part mais pas la seule. On doit tirer des leçons de tout ce qui arrive, en positif ou en négatif.

Une anecdote me revient souvent en mémoire, de l'époque des premières compétitions où j'étais envoyé comme une sorte de messie aux quatre coins du monde et tous les locaux croyaient que ma seule présence allait garantir une fantastique compétition. Il m'est même arrivé d'y croire moi-même, dur comme fer. L'expérience a clairement montré les limites de ce fonctionnement et l'importance de fonctionner en équipe soudée, qui puisse faire face dans les bons comme les mauvais moments.

RSM: En dehors des compétitions, faites-vous également des ouvertures commerciales ?

Jacky: Honnêtement, je ne fais pas d'ouverture commerciale, même s'il m'est arrivé parfois de participer à certaines dans le cadre de workshops. Dans l'absolu, je ne suis pas certain qu'il y ait tant de différence, à part en termes de cible. Pour moi, les questions sont toujours les mêmes : a-t-on atteint notre cible et nos objectifs à travers l'ouverture ?

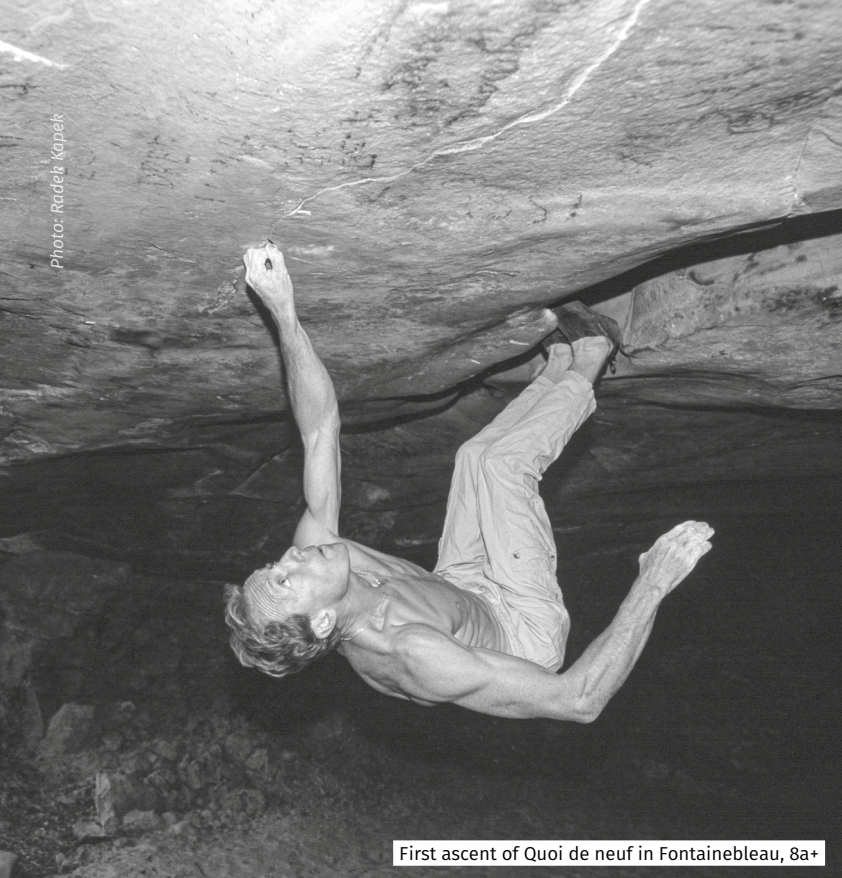
C'est sans doute dû aux opportunités de mon parcours, qui ont fait que j'ai pu développer à Fontainebleau un laboratoire presque unique au monde. Je n'ai pas eu à me préoccuper de chercher un travail car c'était le mien de faire toutes ces expériences. J'apprécie chaque jour la chance que j'ai eue et que j'ai encore.

RSM: Y a-t-il des choses qui vous manquent des premiers temps d'escalade et d'ouverture ?

Jacky: Rien n'a changé à part que mon corps obéit de moins en moins bien aux caprices de mon esprit. Hier comme aujourd'hui, on pense à comment le terrain de jeu pourrait être différent, attractif, surprenant, émotionnel. On évolue dans un univers en constante mutation et on a bien de la chance de pouvoir mettre en lumière les grimpeurs à travers notre travail de l'ombre !



Forerunning at the World Championships in Bercy
Photo: Marc Daviet



First ascent of Quoi de neuf in Fontainebleau, 8a+

can be an average route setter, it is also true that an average climber will not be able to reach the highest level of route setting, even if they have lots of experience. So it's important to reconcile the level of climbing with the level of setting and the targets you want to reach – and to create teams of individuals with complementary qualities. Fortunately, the profession of route setting does not only concern the top athletes.

Most of my job consists of training, learning, and being aware of all the skills we can develop through our setting. This is definitely the link between my previous job as a teacher and my current one as a route setter.

RSM: Do you still climb regularly? Do you have any other hobbies?

Jacky: I climb in Bleau three times a week on average because I can't live without it. While route setting has sort of turned into a job for me, climbing outdoors is still something I get really excited about. You can constantly surprise yourself and play, play, play. I'm still also somewhat devoted to my first true passions: music, writing, composing, playing, playing, playing. Basically, I'm a real kid.

RSM: Lastly, did you ever think that climbing and route setting would reach the level they have reached today?

Jacky: I have never experienced any particular barriers, so I'm not surprised at how they have evolved. I don't know what the limits are, but they are designed to be stretched all the time. We are such a young sport. There is still so much of the story left to write.

At the time this article was published, Jacky was in the process of writing the second edition of his book, "My Keys to Route Setting". To reserve a copy or to learn more about Jacky and his work, visit www.jackygodoffe.com.

RSM: On dirait que dans le passé, on insistait peut-être davantage sur le fait qu'une personne devait d'abord être exceptionnelle comme grimpeuse, avant d'être prise au sérieux ou d'avoir une opportunité en tant qu'ouvreur. Pensez-vous que c'est devenu moins pertinent? Quelle importance accordez-vous à la capacité d'escalade par rapport à la capacité d'ouverture?

Jacky: S'il est vrai qu'un grimpeur exceptionnel peut être un ouvreur moyen, il est aussi vrai qu'un grimpeur de niveau moyen ne pourra pas s'épanouir dans l'ouverture au plus haut niveau, même avec une grande expérience. Donc c'est important de mettre en adéquation le niveau d'escalade, le niveau d'ouverture et les cibles qu'on veut atteindre. Et de composer des équipes avec des qualités complémentaires. Fort heureusement, la profession d'ouvreur ne concerne pas que le top des athlètes.

La majorité du job pour moi reste aussi de la formation, de l'apprentissage, de la prise de conscience de toutes les qualités qu'on peut développer à travers nos ouvertures. C'est sans doute le trait d'union entre mon précédent job de prof et celui d'ouvreur.

RSM: Grimpez-vous encore régulièrement? Avez-vous d'autres passe-temps?

Jacky: Je grimpe à Bleau en moyenne trois fois par semaine car je ne peux pas m'en passer. Si l'ouverture est devenue un peu mon métier, grimper dehors reste pour moi un truc qui me fait délirer. On peut se surprendre sans cesse et jouer en permanence. Je reste aussi un peu fidèle à ma première vraie passion : la musique, écrire, composer, jouer, jouer, jouer. Un vrai gamin !

RSM: Enfin, avez-vous jamais pensé que l'escalade et l'ouverture atteindraient le niveau actuel?

Jacky: Je n'ai jamais eu de barrières particulières, donc je ne suis pas surpris de l'évolution du niveau. Je ne sais pas quelles sont les limites mais elles sont faites pour être repoussées sans cesse. Nous sommes un sport tellement jeune... Il reste tant à écrire.

Au moment de la publication de cet article, Jacky rédige la deuxième édition de son livre My Keys to Route Setting. Pour précommander un exemplaire ou en savoir plus sur Jacky et son travail, rendez-vous sur www.jackygodoffe.com.

JACKY GODOFFE

Born: 1956

Lives in: Melun, France

Background: IFSC Chief Route Setter, Director of the FFME Training Center for Bouldering, Fontainebleau, France. Over thirty years of experience route setting around the world. Be it climbing in Fontainebleau or setting at the training center, I'm always trying to push the limits. I'm not always successful, but I'm always curious!



Photo: D. Montchausse

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CLIMBING HOLDS

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW PART II –
FIBERGLASS AND WOOD VOLUMES

◆ The article *Climbing Holds: A Historical Overview (Part 1, Issue 2, 2019)* touched on fiberglass macros and wood volumes, but there is far more to explore on the topic, so I've prepared this continuation article to try and catalogue even more of the development of our sport.



Janja Gambret at the IFSC Munich World Cup 2019

◆ **You can't watch a competition these days without noticing that the wall is covered in gigantic features. Most are textured, some are shiny, and some are half and half. Many of these features are simple geometric shapes – triangles, squares, flat-faced hexagons, or variations thereof. These are wooden volumes. Others will look more organic, more ergonomic, more like hand-carved plastic holds, except they are bigger than most PE and PU holds. These shapes are fiberglass volumes, also referred to as macros.**

The development of both wood volumes and fiberglass macros in the climbing world has been going on in some form for as long as climbing holds have been made, but only more recently have technologies for making these volumes and macros reached a point where they are a common sight in gyms. With the potential for great variety in shapes and sizes and improvements in design, strength, resilience, color matching, texture, and affordability, these tools can help setters create a more three-dimensional climbing experience and change that experience every time the wall is reset.

The development of volumes and macros in the climbing industry took a parallel path to the development of climbing holds detailed in Part 1. There was not one single origin for most concepts; instead, industry pioneers tried materials and ideas unconnected to other areas of the world where others were trying the same. When climbing media ran a photo of a comp that also helped – one volume or feature might inspire others to try their own materials and designs. Independently, climbers who were handy with wood, fiberglass, and metal made all sorts

of volume and macro prototypes. Some gyms were especially creative, and all kinds of novel things were tried, from bolting sports balls, tires, chairs, traffic cones, and even slides onto climbing walls, to adding swings and building giant features like hanging floating boulders and giant rotating discs to climb on. One gym even made a giant hanging Rubik's cube, and another made a huge wooden Death Star and a wooden school bus with a real horn! These experiments serve to remind us how fun climbing is and how fun it can be, and reinforce the idea that routesetters are in the unique position of getting to play with toys and still having a serious job (fig. 1).



Block'Out Rubik's cube hanging volume

For the day-to-day of comps and gyms, however, basic, useful shapes are very necessary and that is what climbing hold and volume companies now supply in all manner of shapes and sizes.

1980s TO 1990s

Wood

Wood is a readily available material that most people, especially people working on climbing walls, have had some experience with. As referenced in Part 1 (Issue 2, p. 42), some of the earliest climbing walls were made of

wood, like the adjustable wooden walls built in France in the 1950's, or were made with wood features, like early stone-based English walls that had wood ledges and bolt-on wooden holds.

From these roots, cobbling together more add-ons for wooden climbing walls, say simple geometric shapes like triangles, seems fairly easy and obvious. Dealing with issues like planning complex shapes and angles, joining and reinforcing edges, and adding texture took a bit more know-how and experimentation. The woodworking required should not have been complicated enough to delay the development of moveable wooden volumes, but as the industry chased that "real rock" look and feel for a long time, feature development also trended that way, and, perhaps because it was easier to form organic curves with, fiberglass was more heavily represented during the first large artificial climbing development boom in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Fiberglass/GFK

Fiberglass (or GFK in Germany, from *Glasfaserverstärkter Kunststoff*) is the common name for a composite material made of a plastic (usually epoxy, resin, and/or vinyl ester) that is strengthened with glass fibers (or glass fiber sheets stiffened with the plastic). The flexibility and cured strength of fiberglass make it an excellent material for climbing holds and walls as it can be molded into almost any shape and the end product is relatively light. It also accepts paint and texture so it can be made super shiny, like a car body (fig. 2), or can have any level of texture from fine to quite rough.



Super glossy finish with designs by 360

Fiberglass gives designers a lot of artistic freedom. Some outdoor features that are novel and fun to climb on, like giant stalactites resembling those found outside in places like Sardinia in Italy and Kalymnos in Greece, would be difficult to recreate for indoor use with wood or concrete, as the materials are clunky and the end product would be heavy at best. The flexibility of fiberglass makes it possible to produce such complex shapes

and the lightness means that even gigantic features can be raised up and attached to the tops of lead walls – a task that would be much harder and scarier with heavier and more brittle materials.

Seeing these benefits, early wall builders quickly adopted fiberglass and many dramatic walls from the late 1980s and early 1990s were largely made from fiberglass or had custom fiberglass modifiers built to change a specific section of the wall.

Commercial Efforts

One big player early on in fiberglass climbing walls and modifier features was France's Entre-Prises (EP). Somewhat ambitiously, in the 1990s EP even tried to make universal modifiers – huge fiberglass features that could be added onto any climbing wall that had a big enough flat space or the correct angles and a surface that could be screwed into. They continued to evolve their designs and went smaller, creating shapes that would fit on more walls, as illustrated by these photos showing the evolution towards today's modern macros (fig. 3).

MACRO SYSTEM

Our Macro features are three dimensional sculptured shapes that make a flat wood climbing wall come to life. The sculptures can be climbed on their own, or additional hand holds can be added to create easier routes. These features are light and very durable.

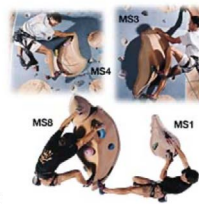


fig. 3

EP website capture from 1999 showing fiberglass macros for sale

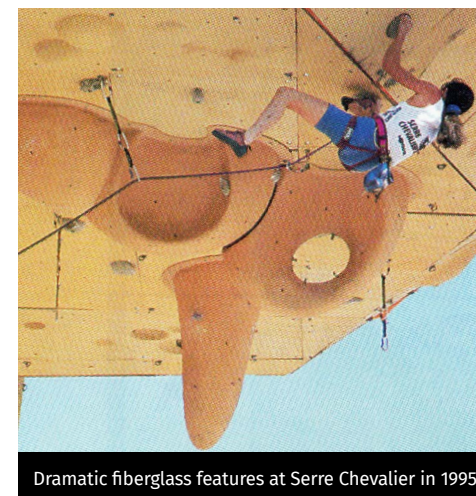
Another early European company still building today is Germany's T-Wall. The wall of the first ever World Championships in 1991 in Frankfurt, Germany, was built by T-Wall and there was an iconic battle between François Legrand and Yuji Hirayama on a stalactite roof feature to decide the men's finals. You can see a picture of this in Issue 2 ("The Evolution of modern Route Setting" from Udo Neumann p. 32).

In the USA in the late 1980s, Dan Goodwin used fiberglass to make walls including the iconic Snowbird wall. More can be found in Part 1 (Issue 2, p. 42).

In the UK, Bendcrete and DR Climbing Walls also cooperated on some large comp walls with fiberglass modifiers including a giant stalactite of their own at The Foundry in 1993/1994 that made waves – so many, in fact, that after the comp the gym quickly took it

down out of fear of injury and litigation. Ian Dunn, a longtime climber and developer who worked for Bendcrete and later EP, said they built the feature from the ground up and put t-nuts inside it as far down as they could reach. To attach it, they drilled through the main climbing wall and bolted the stalactite to an angle iron harness that they'd tied into the steel wall framing. This was labor intensive, but made them confident that the feature would not fall off. All the other fiberglass designs produced in the UK around this period and for years after were similar in that they were bespoke – built to fit a specific place on a specific wall or frame.

In the climbing center of Arco, Italy, Angelo Seneci, founding father of the Rock Master festival and CEO of SintRoc, remembers his company making their own fiberglass following the early 1990s trend of mimicking real rock. In around 1994 in Slovenia, World Cup setter and head shaper/owner of Lapis holds, Aljoša Grom, produced some early fiberglass volumes with JB Tribout for a big comp in Kranj. Tribout shaped some volumes specifically for the routes he set, and Grom made the fiberglass part of them.



Dramatic fiberglass features at Serre Chevalier in 1995

Fiberglass Challenges

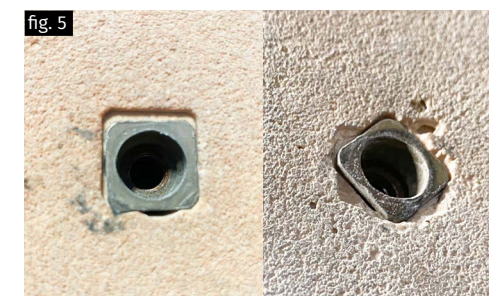
Because fiberglass can be molded to look so organic and dramatic, many fiberglass macros and wall modifiers had handholds carved right into them. These looked great and were cool to use at first but added some challenges for routesetters, especially in competitions – if too large a section of the wall was covered by a fiberglass feature, the setters' options would be limited by what they could do while incorporating the carved fiberglass holds, which might be too hard (or too easy) for the intended difficulty of the route (fig. 4). Manufacturers eventually relied instead on inset t-nuts. The fiberglass addition would create a new look in a section of wall and, with lots of

t-nut options in flat spots where setters could place holds, the routesetters could still dial in the difficulty of the climbs that went through them.



These molded panels make the wall look very busy and can be limiting for routesetters.

This solution was acceptable but still not ideal, as it was hard to get t-nuts into place low down on complex features and it took some doing to keep the t-nuts from spinning. Many t-nuts were simply pinned in place by screws or larger lumps of fiberglass in the back of the hold, which a repeatedly stressed t-nut could then spin or break out of. EP had a few solutions including triangle-flanged nuts (excellent, but expensive, according to Dunn) and then later square t-nuts that they embedded so the square face was flush with the front of the hold (fig. 5). Bendcrete built their own t-nuts out of threaded rods with large washers and nuts on the back to form a flange to screw into the fiberglass. Both companies tried versions of riveting machines that clamped the t-nut parts in from both sides and locked them together, which



EP square t-nut



Rockmaster 1989 from Angelo Seneci



2020 Olympic Sport Climbing Wall by Entre-Prises designed w/homage to Olympic Flame



2010s riveted t-nut in a Délire fiberglass volume

worked fairly well. Other companies tried different things including versions of t-nuts with larger, webbed backs to try and keep them more securely in place.

In addition to the problem of providing t-nuts in the necessary places, for setters to securely put a hold or volume on a fiberglass feature anywhere besides a t-nutted flat spot required them to add a wooden backing or other reinforcement on the inside of the fiberglass. Even with a backing plate, screws into fiberglass always have a risk of tearing the fiberglass, leaving unsightly holes and weaknesses behind (fig. 6). In addition, if the giant feature was already installed on the wall, the setters had to get inside the feature to add the backing plate, which was no easy task.



Worn and torn fiberglass screw holes

There were other problems as well. The climbing wall industry was still forming and so most early fiberglass installs were one-offs

– custom designed and built to fit the space and usually using whatever the newest technology or experimental technology was. The people building them often had experience with fiberglass from other industries and were modifying those techniques to fit the climbing industry's needs. This meant lots of fiberglass builds in this time period were all kinds of funky with problems including finish quality, color matching, fading, tearing, texture degradation, and texture chipping. There were logistical challenges to deal with too, for example, if a gym was not using its giant fiberglass modifiers, it had to store them somewhere. Then there was the money. Ty Foose remembers some early feature experiments with fiberglass and other materials that he and Ian Powell made in the late 1990s and early 2000s for the Boulder Rock Club. They were a lot of fun to climb on, but no one took them seriously, saying that \$100 for one hold was ridiculous and would never fly. The advice was probably not wrong – around this time a review in a climbing magazine complained that a set of Pusher holds was “too expensive” at five XL holds for \$63 – a price that we would all be grateful for today. But the industry was still in development, and for all these reasons, giant fiberglass remained more novel than common. And there was still one more problem with fiberglass.

The most major thing going against much fiberglass at the time – from small features to full fiberglass walls – was off-gassing. Long-time German climber, setter, and coach Udo Neumann reports that some gyms had so much off-gassing fiberglass that they were nearly intolerable to exercise in. He remembers one gym that was still so smelly after a year that they were considering getting rid of their new fiberglass wall. Another year, the German Championships comp wall was custom made just before the event and the resin did not dry properly, so the wall was still wet and sticky when the setters had to set on it. Even when it dried, it still smelled terrible, and was certainly a health hazard for the setters and climbers alike. More than any other issue with fiberglass, off-gassing was a problem that had to be solved if the material was going to have staying power in the industry.

Throughout the 1990s some fiberglass experiments continued, but overall fiberglass walls and features became less common as the industry leaned into rock-like shell concrete, which was messy to work with but looked authentic, and the clean, easy-to-work-with material of wood for walls and volumes.

2000s

Piggybacks

One experiment from the early 2000s was an eGrips hybrid volume – a geometric PU shape with embedded t-nuts for adding holds on top of it. They called it a piggyback (fig. 7) because the added holds were like children riding on the back of the adult hold – like a piggyback ride. This concept was ahead of its time, as the factory had trouble consistently making the volumes and the end product was a bit expensive for the size, so it was abandoned. Subsequently there have been other examples of PU shapes with additional t-nuts for piggybacking, and a few remain on the market even now. The challenges of successfully embedding t-nuts in PU have still not been completely solved though, so most of the industry has stayed with fiberglass and wood for piggybacks.



eGrips piggyback volume

Fiberglass Revisited

In the early 2000s, fiberglass was still not super popular, but it also hadn't been totally abandoned and some fiber shapes began popping up again. This time, though, things were different. Instead of every fiberglass macro install requiring a team, these new features could be bolted or screwed on by a single setter. They were small enough to move around, but large enough to stand out. The first, and most iconic, as discussed in Part 1



Fiberglass was sometimes made into geometric, wood-like volumes as well

(Issue 2, p. 47) was the Taijitu feature by Entre-Prises. The giant, sloping dish, also known as the “pissoir”, was designed with a chainsaw by Laurent Laporte from a tree trunk in his parent's yard. The impact it had on the industry was delayed, as setters took some years to really understand what fiberglass macros were and how to use them. The Taijitu did catch on though, and it remains iconic to this day (fig. 8).



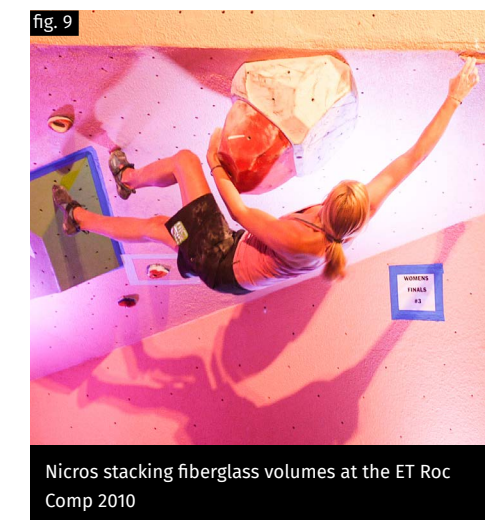
Taijitu

Another US climbing hold company that experimented with fiberglass around this time was Nicros from Minnesota. Owner Nate Postma was constantly searching for new materials and new designs throughout the 1990s and in the early 2000s he wanted to make bigger holds. He settled on fiberglass as a good material and didn't see much in the market so he got a US patent for a fiberglass hollow design he called Extreme Hold Technology, or EHT. This technology relied on a single connection point and the slightly flexible fiberglass to create a “torsion force”



Early creative fiberglass by now-defunct Pantarai

between the hold edges and the wall to prevent the hold from spinning. The technology was not the first bolt-on hollow fiberglass to be made, but the US patent office failed to find prior art so they granted it. The patent is pretty specific and the technology it claims is somewhat limited in that EHT holds had to be tightened carefully and only certain hold designs created this force correctly. Nevertheless, it was an attempt to define the future of fiberglass in climbing holds. Nicros also made some fiberglass macros with embedded t-nuts in them so other holds could be piggybacked onto those – like smaller, more moveable versions of EP's fiberglass work from the 1990s – and they made a stackable multi-volume fiberglass system. These Nicros EHT volumes boasted some of the best finish quality available at the time (fig. 9).

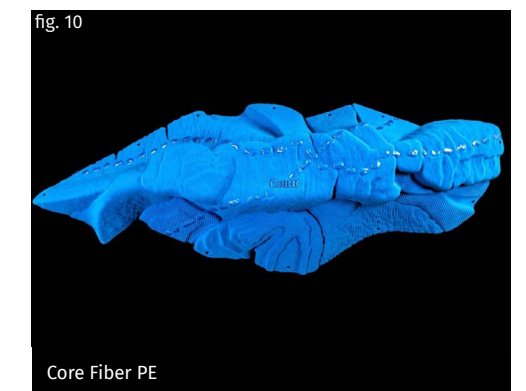


Nicros stacking fiberglass volumes at the ET Roc Comp 2010

Also in the 2000s, wall company Walltopia produced fiberglass walls and, through their label HRT, fiberglass macros. HRT's fiberglass mainly showed up on Walltopia builds, but HRT were likely responsible for the widest range of fiberglass shapes in the late 2000s as they made many creative designs. Most fiberglass still had some quality issues, especially around color matching and texture longevity, so though many of the shapes HRT and others were making looked amazing, many still suffered from quick chipping and degradation.

In England, Stephen Royle of Bleaustone wanted to apply his geology degree by lending more rock realism to the climbing holds he'd started to make, so he and his partner at the time, Lloyd Betsworth, took a jaunt to Fontainebleau for research. When they returned, they created the Cortomaltèse sloper after the infamous 6c+ at Bas-Cuvier. Bleaustone fiberglass was different to other macros available at the time, as it was not only light and strong, but it retained a PE texture, color, and feel – something many still prefer over the

added-abrasive texture of most fiberglass. The technology they developed went with both of them when they split, with Betsworth continuing Bleaustone with the Schlamberger brands in Slovenia and Royle forming the popular English brand Core with partners Leo Moger and Tim Marsh. Core quickly distinguished itself with full-size range lines of holds that matched from macro features down to feet (believe it or not, this was another newer concept in the 2000s). To this day, Core continues to produce high-quality hybrid fiberglass macros with perfect PE color and texture (fig. 10). Betsworth/Schlamberger have also continued to develop their version of the PE/fiber technology, which has been popularized in recent years through their production of Austrian brand Squadra's dramatic Fichtl series (fig. 11).



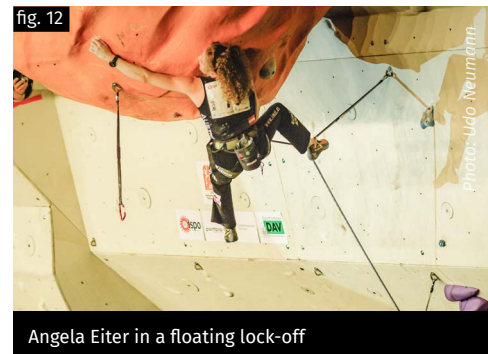
Core Fiber PE



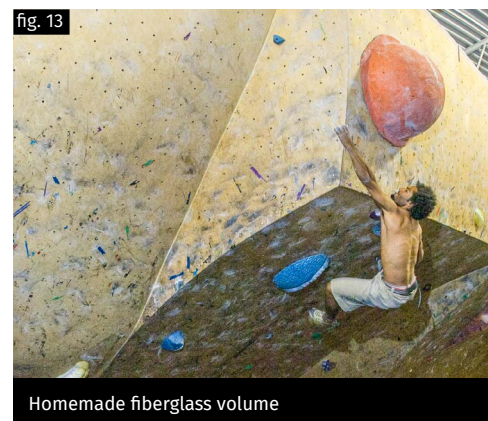
Cleanly finished inside of a Squadra Macro

Jumping back to 2005, Udo Neumann reports that setters for the 2005 World Championships in Munich had one big orange fiberglass volume that they reused for different stages of the event. This led to one of the most iconic moments in comp climbing history to this day – Angela Eiter moving around the bulging feature and, unable to keep her feet, settling for a floating one-arm lock off, then cranking it down even further when she couldn't quite reach the next hold. Her strength and power took everyone's breath away as she com-

pleted the move and went on to win the comp (fig. 12). Moments like these made the value of fiberglass in comp setting clearer than ever.



Angela Eiter in a floating lock-off



Homemade fiberglass volume



Walltopia big eye wall in pieces and in use at the 2009 SLC Tradeshow Comp

Though American Emily Harrington came second behind Eiter in that iconic and well-broadcast moment from 2005, it took several more years for fiberglass to really begin to show up again in the US. There were examples here and there, but two key features in 2009 changed the impression of fiberglass, and both happened at the trade show comp. The first was for qualifiers, when climber and builder John Kehl of Salt Lake City created one of the US's first large fiberglass screw-on features by wrapping fiberglass over one end of a giant propane tank to custom build a big dome feature (fig. 13). The macro was basically untextured and not as refined as modern fiberglass, but it stood out – the big red ball added another dimension to what had been a flat headwall. Using jibs with backing plates for stability, the setters forced the competitors to wrap themselves around the giant bulging volume. That big red dome was quickly outdone by the second new fiberglass feature – the Walltopia finals wall, which was a dramatic two-part structure with an even bigger, redder, giant fiberglass eyeball macro in the middle of one section (fig. 14). The walls in the finals were on the roof of a hotel in Salt Lake City and, with a huge crowd of trade-show-visiting climbers in attendance, these new stand-out features got a lot of industry eyes on them.

This Walltopia feature marked the introduction in the US of more advanced, more professional fiberglass manufacturing for walls and macros. Another notable early and huge US example was Jason Kehl's "The Growth" feature, which was shaped in around 2006 and released in around 2008 by So iLL under Kehl's Cryptochild label (fig. 15). This giant art piece was carved in foam but made in fiberglass by Rockwerx. It was attached via a mounting bracket and, at the last minute, t-nuts were added so holds could be piggybacked on. Unfortunately, Kehl believes the t-nuts likely ruined the function and the feature was not a huge seller. It was also a bit early – about ten years early – for the US market to understand that spending



Jason Kehl shaping his massive "The Growth" feature



The Growth in use at the ET Roc Comp 2010

BRINGING FEATURE CLIMBING TO THE U.S.

The 2009 Mammut Bouldering Championship trade show comp was a big event for volumes in the US. A last-minute addition to the setting crew was French setter Tonde Katiyo, who was on a traveling setting tour of the US. Tonde was an exciting setter to work with in that he brought the European style and new ideas to America. His qualifier boulder was almost purely made from wooden volumes that created more of a traditional problem with a clear line from hold to hold. After painting all the volumes blue to match each other (in those days, volumes were plain wood or painted random colors, often scuffed up and not matching at all), he put skateboarding grip tape on some sections of the otherwise smooth wood faces with the idea that it would provide texture panels for climbers. The concept was good, but it turns out that grip tape gets hot from being grabbed and the adhesive begins to give. A staple gun got the problem through the round, but barely, as the grip tape then began to rip where it was stapled as the rest of the tape continued to slide under the competitor's friction. Subsequently, wooden volume manufacturers have gotten much better at texture, and many volumes are available fully textured, dual-textured, or with specifically textured sections much like Tonde was trying to create (fig. 16).



Tonde's volume problem

EVOLUTION OF COMP CLIMBING

In these photos, you can see how comp climbing evolved between 1996 and 2002. Fig. 17a shows the featured panels with insets and small holds in Graz in 1996. Fig. 17b shows the beginning of the more modern style – the volume and jib heavy 2002 Slovenian Nationals.



Graz 1996



Slovenia 2002

money on having truly huge features on the wall would be a customer draw. This concept is now well understood, and huge features from companies like the Czech Republic's AIX and Slovenia's 360 are fairly common in most gyms.

Improvements in production and quality control are the main reasons why fiberglass is now widespread. These days there are a huge variety of products on the market from many manufacturers that are durable, have good texture, are affordable, and largely do not smell (or stop smelling quickly) so they are appropriate for commercial and competition use.

Wood

In Europe, Angelo Seneci remembers the period from 2000 to 2005 marked by wood volumes becoming common at big events. A few years later, German company Voltomic became one of the first well-known commercial wood volume producers and is still a major player today with their modern fantastic shapes like the incredible Waves and Sails under sub-label Beta Volumes (fig. 18).

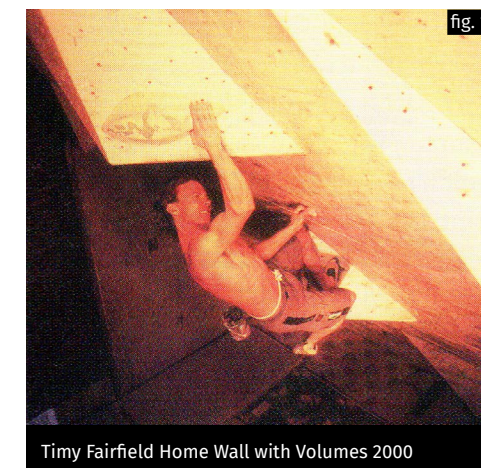


Beta Volumes wooden Sails

Udo Neumann remembers how the original wooden triangles and other simple shapes became too easy for competitors quite quickly, as they learned to wrap and pull on the angle changes. This made them hard to use for effective comp setting and, in Neumann's very respectable opinion, this is what led to more dramatic shapes – some perhaps too dramatic, as Neumann pointed out that

sharp angles and huge relief can be dangerous for competitors and require very careful consideration of movements and fall zones. He prefers the solution of clever modern designs like Slovenia's Simpl. with their large selection of volumes with dual-tex in specific places to limit the competitors' use to what the routesetters want it to be. He also believes that these issues with wood volumes were a big driver towards more fiberglass, as the material allows for a much larger variety of shapes, enabling shapers and setters to increase the neurocognitive difficulty of the climbs in addition to improving the 3D nature of the walls.

American Timy Fairfield had competed extensively in Europe and so had wood volumes on his home wall, but he was early to the trend (fig. 19). It still took the rest of America a few more years to catch on. As more Americans



Timy Fairfield Home Wall with Volumes 2000

began to compete on the world circuit, American setters began building their own volumes to learn more about this new style of setting. To accommodate concrete walls, moveable brackets were made that had sliding bolt placements so that they could be placed almost anywhere, before the volumes were screwed onto the bracket. Wooden volume companies weren't much of a business yet in the US, as wood was heavy and shipping expensive. At this stage, it just made (fig. 20) more sense for people to make their own volumes as opposed to buying them and paying



Wood brackets in two styles

much higher prices that were outside most gyms' hold budgets in the 2000s.

Texture was another challenge. Most of these homemade volumes were slick painted wood, as texture was difficult to put on, get to the right grippiness, and keep on over time. Coating experiments included sand or other abrasives in thick layers of paint, polyurethane coatings, and materials like truck bed liner. Problems included texture being too abrasive, releasing sand into people's eyes, and tearing or otherwise coming off the volume.

In addition to texture or textured sections to grab, wooden volumes are commonly used with small screw-on holds to enhance the grab points. Now many manufacturers make tiny and volume-specific jibs so setters have lots of choice in what jibs to use and can mix up the grip experience to better challenge competitors.

The wooden volume trade picked up quickly in the late 2000s and throughout the 2010s. In addition to volumes from wall companies and random builders, one early leader in more

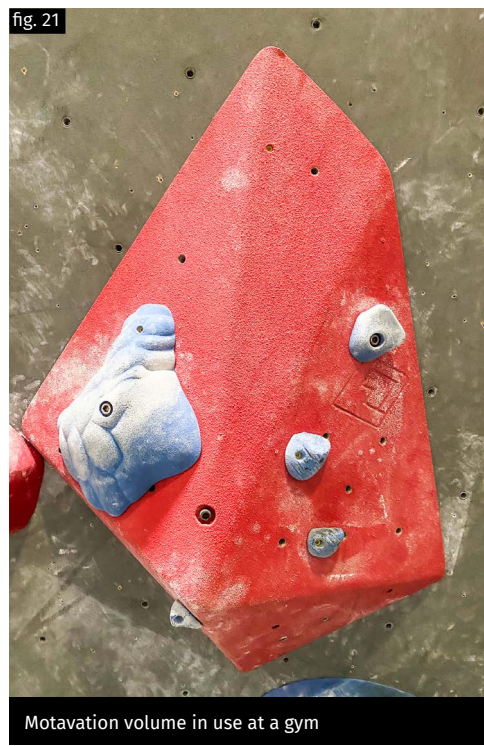


fig. 21
Motavation volume in use at a gym

professional volume design and production in North America was Jared Stains' Motavation Volumes. Motavation (fig. 21) almost single-handedly supported US comp climbing for several years with volumes with a large variety of shapes and evolving textures. When Motavation bowed out, others stepped in, perhaps most notably Montreal's Kristopher Feeney with Dimension Volumes. Dimension's clean finishes and excellent texture put it at the top of North American volume production for years and they won multiple CBJ Grip List Awards. Lots of imported European volumes and macros can now be found in North America alongside American companies like Level, Stoked, and Kumiki.

Fiberglass – Modern Form

In the late 2000s, Taijitu shaper Laurent Laporte's IFSC setter friend Manu Hassler and Manu's partner, visual artist Mathieu Achermann, launched their brand Flathold's first two lines of fiberglass macros – the aptly named Revival and prophetically named Superstar series. The Superstar series was clearly inspired by the Taijitu, and the four shapes within it are various interpretations of Taijitu's thin-edged sloping dish. The Revival series was fatter-lipped, more slopey, and required a lot of brushing and precision. These eight shapes were originally launched in black only, making them easily recognizable as they spread across the world, inspiring setters with what felt like a new direction and look for indoor climbing and inspiring shapers of all types to see what else fiberglass could do in this new wave of macro development. Flathold's follow-up releases were sim-

ilarly well received, and they remain one of the world's top brands for popular fiberglass macros (fig. 22).

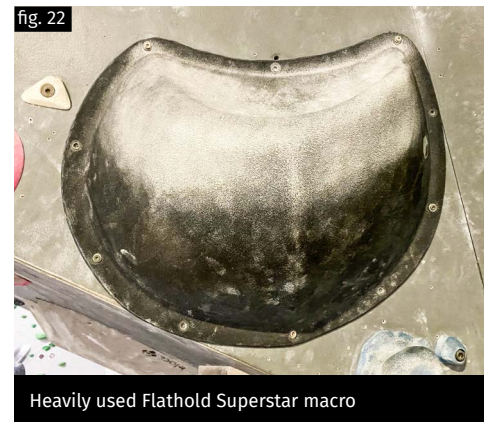


fig. 22
Heavily used Flathold Superstar macro

As described in Part 1 (Issue 2, p. 49), Flathold's fiberglass is produced in Bulgaria by X-Cult. X-Cult does a good trade of their own, and their most recent shapes—a gorgeous line of dual-tex fiberglass from micro (small PE hold size) to macro (mega big macro shapes) and a line of dual-tex wooden volumes—are well regarded worldwide (fig. 23).



fig. 23
X-Cult's fiberglass comes in all sizes

Laporte himself has also continued designing all manner of climbing holds, volumes, and macros, and his brand Cheeta is still a major player on the international scene with his variety of clever solutions for comp setting, including stacking volumes and macros (fig. 24). There are many other companies adding variety to the mix as well – far too many to mention in this article. Some stand-outs include Morpho, which have been steadily making good-quality fiberglass for years now (fig. 25); Bluepill, with their unique "Fibre Impressions" (fig. 26); Blocz, with their good-quality textured wood; Illusion, with their swirl-patterned, two-color, two-texture macros like their stacked layers series (fig. 27); and Rockcity, which have taken the two-color theme in a different direction with their instantly popular series of shiny dual-tex volumes with differently colored, textured gripping spots that really stand out on the wall (fig. 28). As mentioned in Part 1 (Issue 2, p. 49),

Gecko King must also be considered for their many unique fiber shapes that were made for China's World Cups (fig. 29).

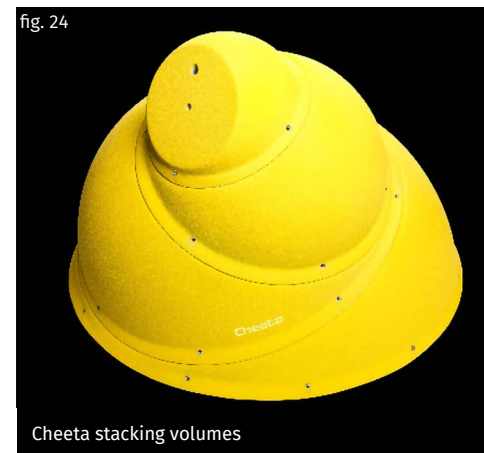


fig. 24
Cheeta stacking volumes



fig. 25
New Morpho Dual-Tex Macro



fig. 26
Bluepill Fibre Impressions



fig. 27
Illusion dual-color dual-tex volumes

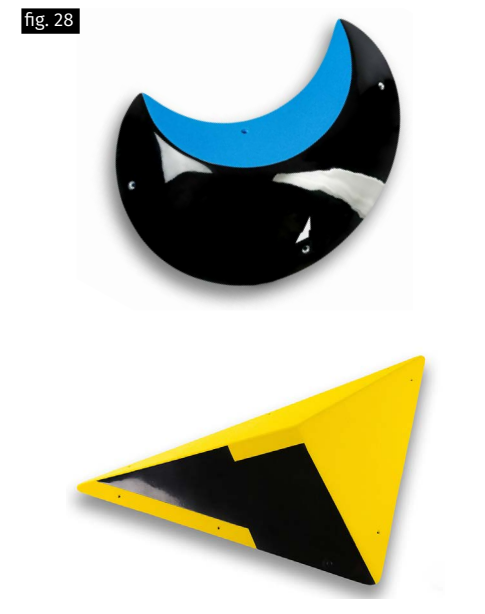


fig. 28



Rockcity dual-color dual-tex macros and wood volume

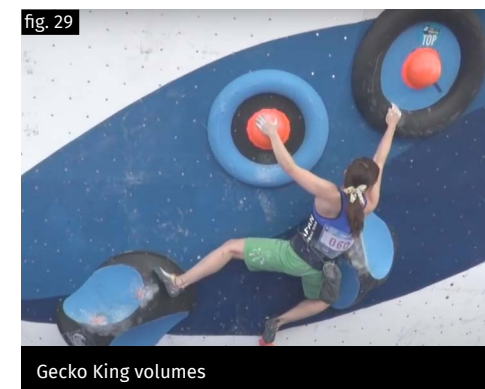


fig. 29

Gecko King volumes

You can probably see that the sheer amount of information about these topics is overwhelming and many innovations and dates are hard to pin down. As with the first Climbing Holds History article, everyone involved remains open to more information to help make this history as accurate as possible. If you have more info to share, please email Jackie at climbingholdmuseum@gmail.com.

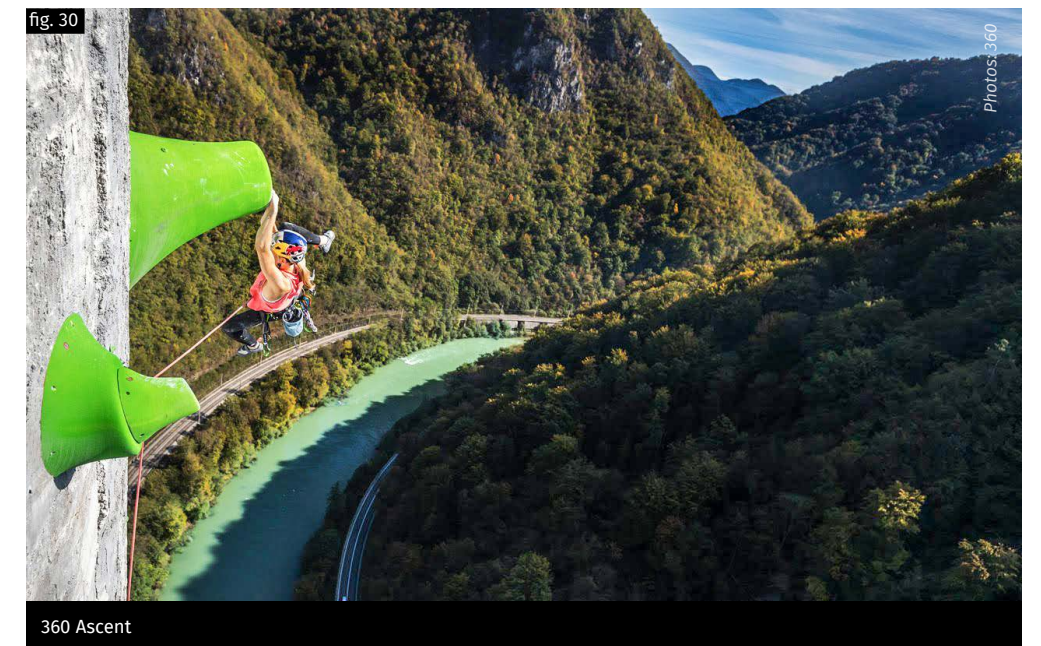


fig. 30
360 Ascent

Any article about fiberglass would not be complete without mentioning the brand that, after Flathold, have been the most influential macro designer in these modern times – 360. 360 burst onto the scene in the mid-2010s with a line of huge features and they've continued to turn out new styles at an incredible pace. They made full routes entirely of huge features, they made giant logoed holds and spinning edge holds and car-body shiny fiberglass with accent stars. 360 also produces holds for several other major brands (Rockcity, for example) and all in all are one of the most influential companies in the climbing hold industry. Their most ambitious project to date may have been the Red Bull 360 Ascent, where owners Simon Margon and Katja Vidmar set a multi-pitch route up the Trbovlje Power Station chimney in Slovenia for World Cup climbers Janja Garnbret and Domen Škofic to climb. If you haven't seen the video, definitely look it up (fig. 30).

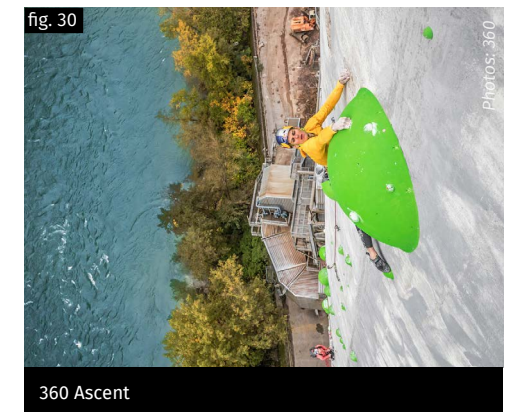


fig. 30
360 Ascent

It is clear that volumes and macros are an important part of the climbing landscape and are here to stay. It will be exciting to see the progression as future innovators continue to create new exciting volumes and macros for us all to enjoy. 🍷

Jackie Hueftle Jackie has been climbing and setting since 1998. She spends a lot of her time collecting information about climbing history and, with her companies Kilter Grips and the Routesetting Institute, working towards the climbing industry's future. Find her on Instagram @thegirlinlongshorts

JACKIE HUEFTLE

Born: 1982
Lives in: Boulder, Colorado, USA
Background: Routesetter, setting instructor at the Routesetting Institute, co-owner of Kilter Grips



Photo: Udo Beißel

It's 12:45am on April 28, 2018 and an emergency call has just come in to the local fire station. When the first emergency responders arrive on the scene just five minutes later, the climbing gym on an old industrial park just outside Cologne, Germany is already in flames..

"The Chimpanzodrome climbing gym burns down" or "Climbing gym burns to the ground" were the headlines people woke up to on the Saturday morning after the night of the fire. There are some headlines that you just gloss over and others that stop you in your tracks. The report of a fire in a climbing gym and, what's more, the fact that the Chimpanzodrome had burned to the ground belonged firmly in the second category for climbers in western Germany, if not the entire country. The news shook the climbing scene to its core. After reading the media reports in horror, members of the climbing community helplessly reached out to each other. The feelings of powerlessness and bewilderment – and the stark realization that not only a building and a climbing gym, but a true institution had been lost – would remain with them for a long time. With the fire, a 22-year era had come to an end.

The climbing gym was opened by the three climbers Hans Nathan, Richard (Richy) Fiala, and Achim Wiesinger a stone's throw from the city of Cologne in Frechen in 1996. All three of its founders were climbers through and through, perhaps even pioneers of a sport that was only just starting to take off in Germany at the time. Hans Nathan and Richy Fiala traveled through the United States with Wolfgang Güllich and others in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Their lives revolved around climbing. "We were and still are completely crazy about climbing," said Hans Nathan in an interview many years later. The trio dreamed of finding a way to earn a living from climbing and of combining this with being able to train regularly. Achim Wiesinger began to produce climbing holds under the brand *Stoneware* and Richard Fiala under the brand *Solid Rock*, making them some of the first in Europe to venture into this line of business. Hans Nathan, meanwhile, turned his attention towards constructing climbing walls. And as time went on, it made sense for the three to open a climbing gym together. Driven more by a vision than a serious business plan, they received a tip from a mutual climbing friend to go and view an empty, brick industrial building to the west of Cologne. The idea soon took root to turn this historic engine shed where trams had once been repaired and maintained into the Chimpanzodrome.

The name "Chimpanzodrome" wasn't just picked out of thin air. Even today, non-climbers believe that the name probably refers to the monkey house at the nearest zoo. The potential ambiguity, play on words, and irony were surely also not lost on Jean-Pierre Bouvier when he climbed the "Chimpanzodrome" route at Le Saussois in France in 1981. Revered in the climbing scene as one of the most difficult in the coun-

Es ist die Nacht vom 27. auf den 28. April 2018. Um 0:45 Uhr geht ein Notruf bei der Feuerwehr ein. Als die ersten Einsatzkräfte nur fünf Minuten später am Brandort eintreffen, steht die Halle im historischen Industrieareal vor den Toren Kölns bereits in Flammen..

„Kletterhalle Chimpanzodrome brennt ab“ oder „Kletterhalle komplett niedergebrannt“ – so beginnen die Schlagzeilen am Samstagmorgen nach der Brandnacht. Es gibt die Art von Nachrichten, die man einfach nur hört und zur Kenntnis nimmt, und es gibt die Art von Nachrichten, die einen für einen kurzen Moment erstarren lassen. Die Meldung eines Brands in einer Kletterhalle und insbesondere, dass das Chimpanzodrome vollständig abgebrannt sei, gehörte für Kletterer in Westdeutschland – wenn nicht sogar in ganz Deutschland – zur zweiten Kategorie. Die Nachricht erschütterte die Kletterszene wie ein Erdbeben. Nach entsetzten Blicken auf die Berichterstattung folgte die fast hilflose Kontaktaufnahme mit gleichgesinnten Kletterfreunden. Zurück blieben Ratlosigkeit und Fassungslosigkeit – und die Erkenntnis, dass hier nicht nur ein Gebäude, eine Kletterhalle, sondern eine echte Institution abgebrannt ist. Mit dem Brand ging nach über 22 Jahren eine Ära zu Ende.

Die Kletterhalle wurde 1996 von den drei Kletterern Hans Nathan, Richard (Richy) Fiala und Achim Wiesinger in Frechen vor den Toren der Millionenstadt Köln eröffnet. Alle drei Mitgründer waren durch und durch Kletterer, vielleicht sogar Pioniere in der noch sehr jungen Sportart in Deutschland. Hans Nathan und Richy Fiala reisten Ende der 70er und Anfang der 80er Jahre u. a. mit Wolfgang Güllich durch die USA. Klettern war ihr Lebensinhalt. „Wir waren und sind einfach kletterverrückt“, äußerte sich Hans Nathan viele Jahre später einmal in einem Interview. Die Vorstellung, mit Klettern den Lebensunterhalt zu verdienen, und das dann noch damit zu verbinden, regelmäßig trainieren zu können, faszinierte die drei. Achim Wiesinger begann unter dem Namen *Stoneware* und Richard Fiala mit seiner Marke *Solid Rock* Klettergriffe zu produzieren. Damit waren sie in Europa mit die ersten, die sich auf diesem Feld versuchten. Hans Nathan begann, erste Kletterwände zu bauen und so lag es nahe, dass man zusammen ja auch eine Kletterhalle eröffnen könnte. Mehr angetrieben von einer Vision als von einem ernsthaften Businessplan, ging man dem Hinweis eines gemeinsamen Kletterfreundes nach, sich einmal die leerstehende, aus Ziegelbackstein gebaute Industriehalle westlich von Köln anzusehen. So nahm das Chimpanzodrome im historischen Lokschuppen, in dem früher Straßenbahnen repariert und gewartet wurden, seinen Anfang.

Der Name „Chimpanzodrome“ war Programm. Bis heute hält sich unter Nichtkletterern die Meinung, der Name nehme vielleicht Bezug auf das Affenhaus des nächstgelegenen Zoos. Die mögliche Doppeldeutigkeit, Wortspielerei und Ironie war sicherlich auch schon Jean-Pierre Bouvier bewusst, als er 1981 im französischen Saussois mit der Route „Chim-

GYM SPOTLIGHT

STRENGTH RESTORED

THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF HOW
CHIMPANZODROME ROSE FROM THE ASHES

TEXT: CHRISTIAN POPIEN



Photo: Chimpanzodrome



Photo: Chimpanzodrome



Photo: Chimpanzodrome

try, it is an overhanging, pocketed route rated 7c+. Jerry Moffatt flashed the route in 1984 and Jacky Godoffe caused quite a stir when he climbed it barefoot.

The name was a great way of creating a similar buzz when the climbing gym was opened in 1996. Located alongside a popular DIY store, the historic industrial building with its large, unique glass façade caught the attention of climbers and non-climbers alike. While the latter frequently gaped through the windows in astonishment, the former were full of excitement that they had finally found a good place to train in bad weather and through the winter months.



Photo: Chimpanzodrome

Climbing and training were exactly what the Chimpanzodrome was all about. Nobody cared that most of the walls had to be climbed with a top rope. Climbers were so familiar with this from the climbing gyms in neighboring Belgium and the Netherlands that this type of climbing had also become commonplace in Germany. They simply didn't mind whether it was lead climbing or top roping that made their lower arms burn. What mattered was having lots of different holds and authentic and challenging route setting.

The Chimpanzodrome's walls were always fitted with such a dense array of holds that excellent route reading skills were vital. A pale yellow and a dark yellow line could have been set closely alongside each other, for example. The similar colors were often difficult to tell apart due to an abundance of chalk and abrasion from shoe rubber. And if you accidentally used the wrong foothold, your fellow warriors denied you the glory of claiming that you had completed the route. If this happened, sometimes all that was left to do was to sprawl out on one of the second-hand sofas, bury your hands between the chalky cushions, and take a breather before getting up, generously re-chalking your hands, and trying again. Some of the Chimpanzodrome's regulars became incredibly strong just by being forced to climb slowly and take their time to find the right holds and footholds. And those who managed clip the chains after successfully climbing the steep overhang not only had aching abs, but were also extremely well prepared for rock climbing outdoors. Sport climbing in the Chimpanzodrome was always an authentic experience and – despite the many developments in the climbing gym industry – remained stripped back to its fundamental values right to the end: good coffee, friendly and sincere people, and climbing simply as it should be.

Many young climbers and future successful stars of the sport started out in the Chimpanzodrome. Anyone who has followed competitive climbing closely in recent years will have noticed how athletes like Jan Hojer and Hannah Meul or Daniel and Markus Jung have repeatedly spoken about their deep



Photo: Chimpanzodrome

panzodrome“ eine der schwersten Touren des Landes kletterte. Eine in der Szene viel beachtet, überhängende Lochkletterei, die mit 7c+ bewertet wurde. Jerry Moffatt gelang 1984 ein Durchstieg im Flash und Jacky Godoffe sorgte mit einer Barfußbegehung seinerzeit für viel Aufmerksamkeit.

Ein guter Name, um im Jahr 1996 mit einer von drei Szenekletterern eröffneten neuen Kletterhalle ähnlich viel Aufmerksamkeit zu erregen. Die historische Industriehalle mit ihrer einzigartigen großen Glasfassade, gleich neben einem gut besuchten Baumarkt gelegen, begeisterte Kletterer und von Klettern ahnungslose Baumarktbesucher gleichermaßen. Die einen staunten regelmäßig verblüfft durch

die Fenster, die anderen waren voller Begeisterung, dass nun endlich eine gute Trainingsmöglichkeit für schlechtes Wetter und den Winter gefunden war.

Im Chimpanzodrome ging es genau darum: Klettern und Training. Dass die Wände überwiegend nur im Toprope zu beklettern waren, störte dabei niemanden. Man kannte das schon aus den Kletterhallen in den benachbarten Niederlanden und Belgien, sodass die Kletterart inzwischen auch hierzulande etabliert war. Ob man nun im Vorstieg oder im Toprope die Unterarme zum Glühen brachte, war schlicht und ergreifend egal. Was zählte, waren viele und abwechslungsreiche Griffe sowie ein ehrlicher und anspruchsvoller Routenbau.

In den stets dicht beschraubten Wänden des Chimpanzodromes galt es, Touren richtig lesen zu können, um sie erfolgreich zu klettern. Da konnten auch schon mal eine hellgelbe und eine dunkelgelbe Linie dicht beieinander geschraubt sein und wenn man dann doch mal den falschen Tritt benutzt hatte, der aufgrund von ähnlicher Farbe, viel Gummibrieb und Chalk kaum noch zu unterscheiden war, wurde einem ein erfolgreicher Durchstieg von den Mitstreitern gerne mal aberkannt. Da blieb einem manchmal nichts anderes übrig, als sich in der Flöz-Landschaft ausrangierter Sofas kurz zu erholen, die Hände in den mit Chalk durchzogenen Polstern zu vergraben und mit gut gechalkten Händen einen neuen Versuch zu wagen. Langsam zu klettern, um die richtigen Griffe und Tritte zu finden, ließ den einen oder anderen Stammgast des Chimpanzodromes mächtig stark werden. Wem es dann noch gelang, nach erfolgreichem Durchstieg durch den steilen Überhang das Toprope wieder in die Zwischensicherungen einzuhängen, hatte manchmal nicht nur Muskelkater in den Bauchmuskeln, sondern war definitiv

gut vorbereitet für das Klettern am Fels. Klettern im Chimpanzodrome war stets ehrlich und trotz der vielen Entwicklungen in der Kletterhallenlandschaft bis zum Schluss auf die wesentlichen Werte des Klettersports reduziert: guter Milchkaffee, nette und herzliche Menschen und einfach nur klettern.

Viele junge und spä-

fondness for the Chimpanzodrome as their home climbing gym. For years, the gym near Cologne was also an important place to go for many other well-known members of the climbing scene. Today, many of these previous customers work in the outdoor industry or are route setters or gym operators in their own right.

As the nature of indoor climbing changed, the Chimpanzodrome stuck to its principles with an almost stoic perseverance. The bouldering area – which was more like a cave with foam blocks thrown on top of each other – was used for training. The route setting challenged the climbers and the difficulty ratings were always in line with those of routes found out on the rock. The walls certainly never gave climbers an easy ride just because they were indoors.

Regulars remained loyal to the gym over the years and newcomers quickly learned that the Chimpanzodrome simply did its own thing without always moving with the times. Symbolic of this was the fact that most of its customers saw changing rooms as unnecessary as long as there was a sofa free. Climbing excursions often began or ended with a coffee in the Chimpanzodrome so that the climbers could talk about the adventures to come or their successes out on the rock.

It's important to paint this picture of what the Chimpanzodrome was all about to create a sense of how the devastating fire in the early hours of April 28, 2018 marked the end of an era. The climbing community hadn't simply lost something that could easily be rebuilt like a sandcastle swept out to sea. Following the fire, many people had their entire livelihoods, the center of their life, and their extended living room taken away from them overnight.

The flames must have spread like wildfire. The last member of staff left the gym at around 11:30pm and neighbors later reported that they hadn't noticed anything unusual shortly after midnight. But by 12:45am, the approximately 40-foot-high (12 meters), 7,500 square foot (700 square meters) building was already engulfed in flames. Over 120 firefighters were called to the scene, but had to concentrate all their efforts on preventing the flames from spreading to the neighboring buildings. Strengthened by various factors, the fire swept through the entire building, a huge wave of heat shattered the window panes, a ceiling caved in, and the 46-foot-high (14 meters) outdoor climbing wall fell down like a house of cards. It took until morning to extinguish the fire. All that was left was a burnt-out ruin at risk of collapse – and a stunned, distraught community of people who had loved this unique climbing gym with a cult status. And of all those left behind, nobody was more devastated



Photo: Guido Schröder

ter sehr erfolgreiche Talente haben ihre Wurzeln im Chimpanzodrome. Wer den Wettkampfsport in den vergangenen Jahren aufmerksam verfolgt hat, wird nicht verpasst haben, dass Athlet:innen wie Jan Hojer und Hannah Meul oder auch Daniel und Markus Jung ihre enge Verbundenheit mit ihrer Heimathalle Chimpanzodrome immer zum Ausdruck gebracht haben. Aber auch für viele weitere bekannte Szene-Akteure war die Halle bei Köln über

Jahre eine wichtige Anlaufstelle. Viele von ihnen sind heute selbst Haltenbetreiber, Routenbauer oder in der Outdoor-Industrie tätig.

Fast mit stoischer Hartnäckigkeit gegenüber der Entwicklung im Indoorklettern blieb das Chimpanzodrome seiner Linie treu. Der Boulderbereich, mehr eine Höhle mit übereinander gewürfelten Schaumstoffkernen, war ein Trainingsbereich. Der Routenbau forderte die Kletterer und die Bewertung der Routen blieb stets am Fels orientiert. Geschenke an der Wand gab es einfach nicht.

Aber auch die Stammkundschaft blieb sich treu und wer neu hinzu kam, lernte schnell, dass im Chimpanzodrome ein anderer Zeitgeist herrschte. Sinnbildlich stand dafür die Tatsache, dass Umkleiden von den meisten als überflüssig gesehen wurde, solange es ein freies Sofa in der Halle gab. Selbstverständlich begannen Kletterreisen an den Fels weiterhin mit einem Milchkaffee im Chimpanzodrome oder endeten in diesem, um ebenfalls mit einem Milchkaffee von seinen Abenteuern und Erfolgen am Fels zu berichten.

Dies und vieles mehr muss man wissen, um zu begreifen, dass das verheerende Feuer in der Nacht vom 27. auf den 28. April 2018 nicht nur eine Kletterhalle zerstörte, sondern eine Ära beendete. Hier ging es nicht darum, dass etwas kaputt gegangen war, das man eben wieder aufbauen kann, wie eine zerstörte Sandburg am Strand. Mit dem Brand des Chimpanzodrome wurde vielen von einem Tag auf den anderen die Existenzgrundlage, der Lebensmittelpunkt und das erweiterte Wohnzimmer genommen.

Die Flammen müssen sich rasant ausgebreitet haben. Gegen 23:30 Uhr hat der letzte Mitarbeiter die Halle verlassen und auch um kurz nach Mitternacht war Nachbarn noch kein Feuer aufgefallen. Um 0:45 Uhr stand die 700 m² große und 12 m hohe Halle bereits in Vollbrand. Über 120 Feuerwehrkräfte konnten sich zum Schluss nur darauf konzentrieren, ein Übergreifen der Flammen auf die benachbarten Gebäude zu verhindern. Verstärkt durch unterschiedliche Faktoren zündete das Feuer durch, eine enorme Hitzewelle ließ die Scheiben bersten, eine Decke einstürzen und die 14 m hohe Außenkletterwand wie ein Kartenhaus in sich



Photo: Guido Schröder

than gym operator Achim Wiesinger, his daughter Maite, and his team of staff.

Their horror and sadness were followed by many questions: Where do we go from here? What caused the fire? How could this happen? Will our insurance pay out?

What followed was weeks of hope and anguish. Investigations into the cause of the fire could not start straight away because the building's burnt-out shell was at serious risk of collapse and access was prohibited. Investigators could only begin their work once parts of the façade had been torn down by heavy machinery. The key question was whether the building insurance would cover the damage.

Following the initial sadness and shock, solidarity came pouring in from friends, climbers, and locals.

The climbing gym didn't have any business interruption insurance in place, so supporters set up a donation account for staff to compensate for any potential loss of earnings. But the solace and support given to operator Achim Wiesinger, his family, and the entire team ended up being far more important than the financial aid. *(Original co-owners Hans Nathan and Richard Fiala had long since departed.)*

Bolstered by this support, they felt an increasing sense of hope and found the courage to dare to dream about a fresh start. "After just a week, it was clear to me that we wanted to rebuild the Chimpanzodrome," recalls Maite Wiesinger. However, almost a year went by before a firm decision could be made. A few weeks after the devastating fire, the investigators concluded that it had been caused by a technical fault. But even then, the insurance company took months to make its final decision on how much to pay out.

These weeks and months of complete uncertainty were a long time to think about how to even approach rebuilding something so unique and irreplaceable. All the money in the world couldn't bring back what had been lost. *(You can read about this and much more in the interview with Achim Wiesinger following this article.)*

Finally, almost a year to the day after the gym burned to the ground, news spread – almost as quickly as word of the fire itself – that the Chimpanzodrome was going to be rebuilt.

Together with her business partner Marcel Pierrri, Maite Wiesinger announced her plans to rebuild and run the new Chimpanzodrome on the original site. "The new Chimpanzodrome will be bigger than the old gym," revealed Maite in an interview in 2019. As stated by Achim Wiesinger early on: "We can't bring back the old gym, but we want to recreate the flair and atmosphere of the old Chimpanzodrome."

The project was bold and saw a new generation take to the helm. As the last of the three founders of the original Chimpanzodrome, Achim Wiesinger decided to step back from the operational side of the business and to pass the baton to a younger team – not, however, before using his experience and expertise to help guide the new gym operators through the entire reopening process.

zusammenfallen. Die Löscharbeiten dauerten bis in den Morgen. Zurück blieben eine stark einsturzgefährdete Brandruine – und eine fassungslose, zutiefst traurige Community aus Freundinnen und Freunden dieser einmaligen Kletterhalle mit Kultstatus. Und zurück blieb vor allem ein erschütterter, bis ins Mark getroffener Betreiber Achim Wiesinger mit Tochter Maite und Team.

"WE CAN'T BRING BACK THE OLD GYM, BUT WE WANT TO RECREATE THE FLAIR AND ATMOSPHERE OF THE OLD CHIMPANZODROME."

„WIR KÖNNEN DIE ALTE HALLE NICHT ZURÜCKBRINGEN, ABER WIR WOLLEN DAS FLAIR UND DAS AMBIENTE DES ALTEN CHIMPANZODROMES NEU ENTSTEHEN LASSEN“

Dem Entsetzen und der Traurigkeit folgten viele Fragen: Wie soll es weitergehen? Was war die Ursache? Wie konnte das passieren? Zahlt die Versicherung?

Es folgten Wochen des Hoffens und Bangens. Die stark einsturzgefährdete Brandruine durfte nicht betreten werden, sodass die Suche nach der Brandursache zunächst nicht möglich war. Erst nachdem Teile der Fassade mit schwerem Gerät abgerissen wurden, konnten die Sachverständigen mit den Ermittlungen beginnen. Es ging um die wichtige Frage, ob die Gebäudeversicherung den Schaden übernehmen würde.

Gleichzeitig folgte nach der Trauer und dem Schock eine Welle der Solidarität von Freunden, Kletterern und Menschen aus der Region. Da keine Ertragsausfallversicherung bestand, wurde für die Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter ein Spendenkonto eingerichtet, um einen möglichen Verdienstaufschlag auszugleichen. Aber noch viel wichtiger als die finanziellen Hilfen waren der Trost und die Unterstützung für Betreiber Achim Wiesinger, seine Familie und das Team. *(Anmerkung: Hans Nathan und Richard Fiala waren bereits seit längerem als Inhaber ausgestiegen.)*

Getragen von dieser Unterstützung stiegen die Hoffnung und der Mut, vielleicht doch einen Neuanfang zu wagen. „Für mich stand eigentlich schon nach einer Woche fest, dass wir das Chimpanzodrome wieder aufbauen wollen“, erinnert sich Maite Wiesinger. Bis dieser Wunsch zu einer festen und belastbaren Entscheidung kommen sollte, verging allerdings fast ein Jahr. Wenige Wochen nach dem verheerenden Feuer wurde ein technischer Defekt als Brandursache genannt. Bis die Versicherung ihre finale Entscheidung zu Art und Umfang der Entschädigung traf, sollten allerdings noch einige Monate vergehen.

Es waren Wochen und Monate voller Ungewissheit – eine lange Zeit, um sich mit der Frage zu beschäftigen, wie überhaupt etwas wieder aufgebaut werden kann, das in seiner Einzigartigkeit nicht zu ersetzen ist. Kein Geld der Welt würde das Vergangene wieder zurückbringen. *(Darüber und vieles mehr lest ihr im nachfolgenden Interview mit Achim Wiesinger.)*

Ziemlich genau ein Jahr nach der Zerstörung der Halle – ähnlich schnell wie damals bei ihrem Brand – verbreitet sich schließlich die Nachricht, dass das Chimpanzodrome neu errichtet wird.

Zusammen mit Geschäftspartner Marcel Pierrri möchte Maite Wiesinger das neue Chimpanzodrome an der alten Wirkungsstätte wieder aufbauen und betreiben. „Das neue Chimpanzodrome soll größer werden als die alte Halle“, verkündet Maite 2019 in einem Interview. Und Achim Wiesinger formuliert schon früh: „Wir können die alte Halle nicht zurückbringen, aber wir wollen das Flair und das Ambiente des alten Chimpanzodromes neu entstehen lassen“.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the planning and construction phase coincided with a period marked by much uncertainty. In many parts of the world, climbing gyms had to shut their doors for several months. But Maite Wiesinger and Marcel Pierrri carried on rebuilding the gym regardless during this time. When in June 2021 climbing and bouldering gyms were permitted to reopen in Germany after seven months of being closed, work on the new Chimpanzodrome was almost complete. On June 14, 2021, the new operators announced the reopening on social media: *"The time has finally come! After more than three years, we're back! We can't wait to welcome you to the new gym from Tuesday, June 15, 2021."*

As to be expected due to the pandemic, there was no big party. But even without a grand reopening, a sense of excitement could be felt radiating around the timber building, as light flooded through its huge glass façade. The glass front isn't the only nod to the Chimpanzodrome's past. Previous customers are also bound to instantly recognize other key features of the gym. On entering the building through the glass façade, you will still be greeted by a view across the entire gym. The striking Chimpanzodrome overhang 2.0 is in the same spot as before. Although the old top ropes have been replaced by a modern, appealing lead climbing zone, other wall elements like the "Schiffsbug" or "Ship's Bow" (which was originally just called the "Bow") have been included in the new wall design. Everywhere you turn, you can see how the wall design impressively combines old school features from the original gym with modern climbing wall elements. The building's natural wooden design is also reflected on the climbing walls. The only part of the previous gym to have been fully replaced is the old, dark bouldering cave, which has been supplanted by a large, attractive 11,000 square foot (1,000 square meter) bouldering area.

The new Chimpanzodrome was not only built with lots of attention to detail, but can also justifiably call itself one of the most sustainable climbing gyms in Europe. All of the wood used to construct it was sustainably sourced from Austria. A large rooftop photovoltaic system provides the building with all the energy it needs and also supplies the electric car charging stations in front of the gym. Gone are the days when customers had to wear down jackets to stay warm due to a lack of heating in the old Chimpanzodrome. The new building is equipped with a modern wood gas heating system, which heats the floors and provides hot water.

Before retreating to the cozy corner next to the fireplace with a cup of coffee or looking down on the action from the wooden viewing

Das Vorhaben ist mutig und mit einem Generationenwechsel verbunden. Als letzter der drei Gründer des ursprünglichen Chimpanzodromes beschließt Achim Wiesinger, sich aus dem operativen Geschäft zurückzuziehen und den Neuanfang in die Hände eines jungen Teams zu legen – allerdings nicht ohne den gesamten Prozess bis zur Eröffnung mit seiner Erfahrung und Expertise zu begleiten.

Die Planungs- und Bauphase fällt wegen der Corona-Pandemie in eine Zeit, die durch Unsicherheit und Ungewissheit geprägt ist. Das Indoorklettern kommt in weiten Teilen der Welt für mehrere Monate zum Erliegen – Zeit, in der Maite Wiesinger und Marcel Pierrri ihr Vorhaben unbeirrt weiter umsetzen und den Neubau der Halle voranbringen. Als im Juni 2021 die Kletter- und Boulderhallen in Deutschland nach sieben Monaten Stillstand wieder öffnen, sind auch die Arbeiten am neuen Chimpanzodrome fast abgeschlossen. Am 14. Juni 2021 verkünden die neuen Betreiber auf ihren Social-Media-Kanälen: *„Endlich ist es so weit! Nach über drei Jahren sind wir wieder zurück! Wir freuen uns, euch ab Dienstag, den 15.06.2021, in der neuen Halle begrüßen zu können.“*

Die große Party muss, wie so viele Feste und Feiern, wegen Corona ausfallen. Aber auch ohne feierliche Eröffnung strahlt der lichtdurchflutete Holzbau mit selbstverständlich großer Glasfassade. Kenner des Chimpanzodromes werden auch ohne Erklärungen wesentliche Elemente der Halle wiedererkennen. Betritt man das Gebäude durch die Glasfassade, erschließt sich einem wieder ein offener Blick über die gesamte Halle. Der markante Chimpanzodrome-Überhang 2.0 befindet sich an gleicher Stelle. Die alten Toprope-Seile sind allerdings verschwunden und einem modernen und ansprechenden Vorstiegsbereich gewichen. Aber auch andere Wandelemente wie der (seinerzeit nur „Bug“ genannte) „Schiffsbug“ wurden im neuen Wanddesign mit aufgenommen. Überhaupt lässt sich feststellen, dass das Wanddesign die Oldschool-Elemente von damals auf beeindruckende Weise mit modernen Kletterwandformen kombiniert. Die natürliche Holzoptik des Gebäudes ist dabei auch in die Kletterwände übergegangen. Einzig und allein die alte, dunkle Boulderhöhle ist einem großzügigen, ansprechenden und 1.000 m2 großen Boulderbereich gewichen.

Das neue Chimpanzodrome wurde nicht nur mit viel Liebe zum Detail gebaut, sondern darf sich zurecht eine der nachhaltigsten Kletterhallen Europas nennen. Das gesamte Holz für den Bau des Gebäudes stammt aus nachhaltigem Holzanbau in Österreich. Auf dem Dach befindet sich eine großzügige Photovoltaikanlage, mit der nicht nur das Gebäude mit der notwendigen Energie versorgt wird, sondern auch die eigenen Ladesäulen für Elektroautos vor der Halle. Wurde im al-

MAITE WIESINGER

Born: 1995

Lives in: Cologne, Germany

Background: studied at the German Sport University Cologne, B. Sc. degree in Sports and Performance; grew up climbing at the old Chimpanzodrome

MARCEL PIERRI

Born: 1990

Lives in: Hürth, Germany

Background: trained IT specialist; started climbing at the old Chimpanzodrome in 2016

Maite and Marcel are now managing partners at Chimpanzodrome.

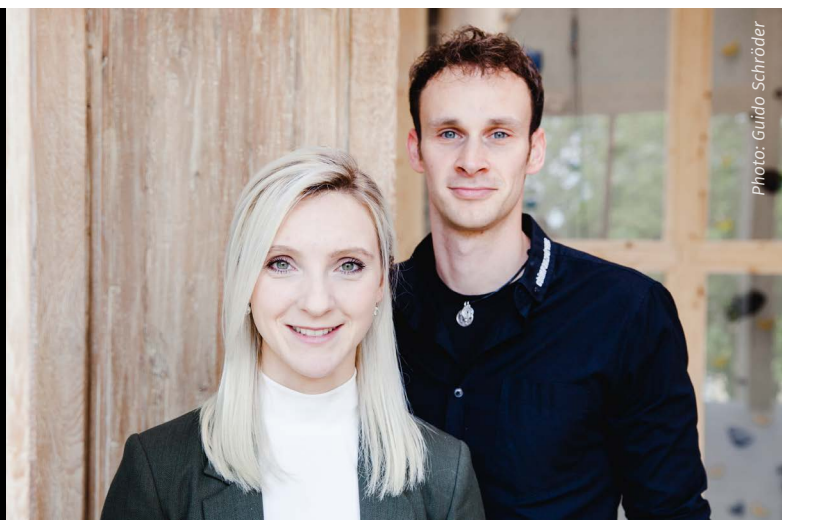


Photo: Guido Schröder

platform, make sure that you try out some of the over 190 routes for yourself. Like in days gone by, the Chimpanzodrome has more than enough climbing opportunities on offer for everyone to increase their strength. In terms of route quantity and quality, the new gym has picked up where the old one left off. At grade seven or lower, you can take things at a relatively relaxed pace, but things really ramp up as soon as you leave the "leisure zone" and tackle the routes graded eight or higher (UIAA). Here, the ratings are an authentic representation of conditions out on the rock, and the old mantra that "Frechen is the place to build muscles of steel" still stands. This saying neatly sums up what the Chimpanzodrome is all about: climbing, training, and building strength for your next rock climbing holiday. And it's amazing that this last point in particular still rings true.

The Chimpanzodrome is back! Not as before, but it's still championed and brought to life by a strong community, loyal fans, and passionate supporters. A climbing gym by climbers for climbers.

"THE NEW CHIMPANZODROME WAS NOT ONLY BUILT WITH LOTS OF ATTENTION TO DETAIL, BUT CAN ALSO JUSTIFIABLY CALL ITSELF ONE OF THE MOST SUSTAINABLE CLIMBING GYMS IN EUROPE."

„DAS NEUE CHIMPANZODROME WURDE NICHT NUR MIT VIEL LIEBE ZUM DETAIL GEBAUT, SONDERN DARF SICH ZURECHT EINE DER NACHHALTIGSTEN KLETTERHALLEN EUROPAS NENNEN."

damals soll es nicht am mangelnden Kletterangebot im Chimpanzodrome liegen, dass man selbst nicht stark wird. In puncto Quantität und Qualität der Routen knüpft man nahtlos an die alte Halle an. Bei der Bewertung geht es dafür bis zum unteren achten Grad eher gemächlich zu, was sich allerdings schlagartig ändert, sobald man den „Plaisirbereich“ verlässt und die Routen ab dem achten Grad (UIAA) in Angriff nimmt. Dann geht es wieder „ehrlich“ zu bei der Bewertung und es gilt heute wie damals: „In Frechen wird man stark“. Der Spruch bringt auf den Punkt, worum es im Chimpanzodrome geht: um Klettern, Training und irgendwie auch immer noch darum, stark zu werden für den nächsten Kletterurlaub am Fels.

Das Chimpanzodrome ist zurück! Nicht so wie vorher, aber getragen und mit Leben gefüllt von einer starken Community, treuen Fans und leidenschaftlichen Anhängern. Eine Kletterhalle von Kletterern für Kletterer.

ten Chimpanzodrome lieber mal auf Heizen verzichtet oder es vorgezogen, mit Daunenjacken zu sichern, ist der Nachfolger mit einer modernen Holzvergaserheizung ausgestattet, welche die Bodenplatte beheizt und warmes Wasser aufbereitet.

Bevor man sich mit Milchkaffee in die gemütliche Kaminecke zurückzieht oder von der Holzgalerie aus den anderen dabei zusieht, wie sie sich die Arme lang ziehen, sollte man unbedingt einige der über 190 Touren geklettert haben. Wie schon



Photo: Guido Schröder



Photo: Christopher Pattberg

CHRISTIAN POPIEN

Born: 1978

Lives in: Gummersbach, Germany

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



ACHIM WIESINGER

AN INTERVIEW WITH A CO-FOUNDER OF CHIMPANZODROME

INTERVIEW: CHRISTIAN POPIEN

CP: When you opened the Chimpanzodrome just outside Cologne, Germany in 1996, indoor climbing was still in its infancy. Why did you decide to open a climbing gym back then?

Achim: There were two reasons. Firstly, it was the realization that we could use the burgeoning trend towards indoor climbing as an opportunity to turn our hobby into a career. And secondly, we had a vested interest in creating a space for sport climbers to train. When our gym opened, our trips to train in Belgium and the Netherlands became a thing of the past!

CP: Indoor climbing continued to evolve throughout your time in business. What developments did you notice and, as one of the industry's first climbing gyms, how did you deal with this?

Achim: You only had to look at the growing number of people discovering sport climbing to see how indoor climbing developed into more of a moneymaker. However, over the years it also became more of a recreational sport and a way of keeping fit. And – in my personal opinion – its character changed from what I had come to know and love, and the focus was increasingly on consumers. Of course, it's important to get the balance right, because even climbing gyms can't survive on passion for the sport alone. What they need are paying customers.

Despite all of this, we always put climbing center stage. This meant, for example, that we always tried to match our difficulty ratings to the conditions you would find out on the rock. We believed that watering down the difficulty just to give customers a sense of achievement



ACHIM WIESINGER

Born: 1966

Lives in: Eifel, Germany

Background: Climbing gym operator since 1996

< Achim Wiesinger 1995 in Majorca

CP: Als ihr 1996 das Chimpanzodrome vor den Toren Kölns eröffnet habt, steckte das Indoorklettern noch in seinen Anfängen. Was hat dich/euch damals angetrieben, eine Kletterhalle zu eröffnen?

Achim: Es war zum einen sicherlich die Erkenntnis, dass wir bei der damaligen Hallenkletterentwicklung das Hobby zum Beruf machen konnten, und zum anderen war es Eigennutz im Hinblick auf das Sportklettern: Die Fahrerei Richtung Belgien und Holland war damit passé! Jetzt hatten wir einen eigenen Trainingsraum.

CP: Das Hallenklettern hat sich im Laufe eures Bestehens immer weiter entwickelt. Wie hast du die Entwicklung wahrgenommen und wie seid ihr als Halle der ersten Stunde damit umgegangen?

Achim: Naja, das Hallenklettern entwickelte sich wirtschaftlich gesehen sicherlich positiv, wenn man auf die immer größere Anzahl von Menschen schaute, die den Klettersport für sich entdeckten. Allerdings entwickelte sich das Ganze ja immer mehr zum Breiten- und Fitnesssport hin und der Charakter des Kletterns – und hier spreche ich jetzt nur für mich –, wie ich ihn schätzen gelernt hatte, änderte sich immer mehr in Richtung Konsum. Das ist natürlich ein Spannungsfeld, denn

wouldn't help them from a sporting perspective. We also witnessed other changes that often caused [co-founder] Richy and me to wonder what on earth they had to do with climbing.

Ultimately, it seems like we managed to find the right balance between what our customers wanted and our own visions. And this is what made the Chimpanzodrome unique. Some people loved it, while others thought it wasn't snazzy enough. But it was always a place where climbers and boulderers could train hard.

CP: Memories of the fateful day, April 28, 2018, when the Chimpanzodrome burned down will likely stay with you forever. What goes through your mind now when you look back on that day?

Achim: That's a very difficult question. The images I have of that night will never be erased from my mind. It was a traumatic event, and I have gaps in my memory when I think back to what happened that night and on the days that followed. It was a terrible turn of events and I hope that I won't have to experience anything like it again. The only positive thing was that nobody was injured or lost their life.

CP: How did you find the courage and resolve to rebuild the climbing gym after such a devastating event that saw your life's work burn to the ground and what were the greatest challenges involved?

Achim: The first big challenge was waiting almost a year for the insurance company to decide that it would pay out in full. We couldn't even begin to decide whether to start again until this had been resolved. We also had to discuss whether it even made sense to rebuild the Chimpanzodrome as it was before the fire. From a structural point of view, it was impossible to recreate the features that had previously made the building stand out. And without the charm of the old building, simply constructing a new building with the same dimensions would not have been enough to rebuild what we had lost. Therefore, the only choice we had was to reinvent the old by designing a modern, future-proof version of the Chimpanzodrome. This meant taking out significant loans, which for me alone – as someone aged over 50 who would have to repay them for the next 20 years – would not really make financial sense. The biggest challenge was therefore developing a plan that was viable in the long term. We ended up spending hours with our tax consultant (who I also like to call our life coach) and this eventually led to the set-up we have today.

Leaving the financial aspects to one side, the conversations we had with former customers after the fire motivated us to start again. This was the first time that it truly dawned on me that the Chimpanzodrome was more than just a climbing gym. Every corner of the Chim-

auch eine Kletterhalle kann nicht nur von Begeisterung für den Sport leben, sondern braucht auch zahlende Kunden.

Trotz alledem haben wir das Klettern immer in den Mittelpunkt gestellt. Das bedeutete zum Beispiel, dass wir versucht haben, die Schwierigkeitsbewertung immer mit Hinsicht auf den Fels festzulegen. Eine Verwässerung der Schwierigkeitsbewertung im Sinne der Erfolgserlebnisse für kletternde Kunden fanden wir sportlich nicht hilfreich. Daneben gab es natürlich noch andere Veränderungen, die auf uns zukamen, und wir (Richy und ich) haben uns dann auch öfter gefragt, was das Ganze denn mit dem Klettern zu tun hat.

Schlussendlich haben wir den schmalen Grat zwischen Kundenwunsch und unserer eigenen Vorstellung scheinbar gefunden, der das Chimpanzodrome zu dem gemacht hat, was es war. Die einen liebten es, den anderen war es nicht schnee genug, aber immer war es ein Ort, an dem man gut und hart klettern und bouldern konnte.

CP: Der Schicksalstag, der 28. April 2018, wird dir wahrscheinlich für immer in Erinnerung bleiben. Was geht dir heute durch den Kopf, wenn du an den Tag zurückdenkst?

Achim: Das ist nicht ganz leicht zu beantworten. Die Bilder, die ich von dieser Nacht im Kopf habe, werde ich sicher nie vergessen. Das war ein traumatisches Erlebnis und ich habe von dieser Nacht und auch von den Folgetagen Erinnerungslücken. Das war für mich der absolute Ausnahmezustand und ich hoffe, so etwas nicht nochmal erleben zu müssen. Das einzig Positive war, dass keiner verletzt oder ums Leben gekommen ist.

CP: Wie fasst man nach so einem dramatischen Ereignis, bei dem ja nicht einfach nur eine Kletterhalle abgebrannt ist, sondern auch ein Lebenswerk zerstört wurde, den Mut und den Entschluss, die Halle wieder aufzubauen und worin lagen die größten Herausforderungen?

Achim: Die erste große Herausforderung bestand für mich darin, die Zeit zu überstehen bis klar war, dass die Versicherung zu 100% zahlt – denn das hat fast ein Jahr gedauert. Das war natürlich überhaupt erst die Grundlage, auf der wir entscheiden konnten, ob es einen Neustart geben würde oder auch nicht. Darüber hinaus haben wir uns natürlich auch mit der Frage beschäftigt, ob es überhaupt Sinn macht, das Chimpanzodrome in alter Form wieder aufzubauen. Das, was es ausgemacht hat, war baulicherseits nicht wieder darzustellen, und ein Neubau in alter Dimension ohne den Charme des alten Gebäudes allein wäre zu wenig gewesen, um an das Alte anzuknüpfen. Insofern kam dann eigentlich nur in Frage, das alte Chimpanzodrome in einer modernen, zukunftsfähigen Version neu zu erfinden. Das bedeutete natürlich auch die Neuaufnahme von nicht unerheblichen Krediten, was für mich alleine – mit über 50 und perspektivisch für die nächsten 20 Jahre – wirtschaftlich nicht zweifelsfrei sinnvoll gewesen wäre. Deshalb war dann die größte Herausforderung, einen Plan zu entwickeln, der langfristig tragfähig war. In der Folge haben wir Stunden bei unserem Steuer- (ich sag auch immer Lebens-)berater verbracht, was schlussendlich zur heutigen Konstellation geführt hat.

Eine Motivation für den Neustart abseits des Wirtschaftlichen waren allerdings auch die Gespräche nach dem Brand mit ehemaligen Kunden. Ich glaube, mir ist erst da richtig bewusst geworden, dass das Chimpanzodrome einfach mehr war als eine simple Kletterhalle. Es

panzodrome had a story to tell. It was a place where ideas for other climbing gyms had formed, and some relationships and families may never have existed without it. The fire had destroyed a special place for people to meet, share experiences, and live life to the full. [Former customer] Klaus E. often referred to the Chimpanzodrome as a "drop-in clinic" and I think that's very fitting. It would have been sad if the fire had ended all that.

CP: You must have experienced some doubts as you weighed up what to do. Eventually, you decided to put your daughter in charge of rebuilding, redesigning, and managing the gym. What made you step back from the operational side of things and from the overall management of the gym?

Achim: During the planning stage, it became clear to me that the art of running a modern climbing gym had become further and further removed from what climbing means to me. I don't mean this negatively; it's simply an observation. A lot of positive things have certainly come out of these changes – but I'm probably too much of a dinosaur to understand them properly. When we ran the old gym, Richy and I used to ask ourselves why people needed an introduction to bouldering course. This simply didn't fit with our outlook (on life) and how we approached climbing. I used to wonder what would come next. A course on how to breathe in and out, perhaps (laughs)?

A modern climbing gym needs modern ideas and the niche that the old Chimpanzodrome had carved out for itself was destroyed by the fire. To cut a long story short, I realized that I may have got into arguments if I had remained involved in operating the gym. And I don't just mean arguments about climbing, but also arguments with my daughter, Maite. Arguing with my daughter about business was the last thing that I wanted. So I entrusted Maite and Marcel to develop a future-proof climbing gym that would strike a balance between producing a feel-good atmosphere, building good customer relations, and achieving the necessary commercial success. To many people's delight, they have managed to do just that. I'm proud of what they have built.

CP: You look back on almost 30 years of industry experience and have also lived through something that you wouldn't wish on anyone else. What words of wisdom do you have for the industry and the many young gym operators out there?

Achim: Like everything, the climbing gym industry is in a constant state of flux. I think that many young colleagues want to operate a climbing gym for the same reasons that we did: to earn a living from what they love. You'd be better off choosing another industry if money is all you're interested in. But what does make you rich are the happy customers who share part of their life with you in your climbing gym. You can't get that from a job at the tax office (laughs). The youngsters are doing great... they're just doing things differently! ♦

gab Geschichten in jeder Ecke des Chimpanzodromes, es sind Beziehungen und Familien entstanden, Keime für weitere Kletterhallen und mit dem Brand war ein Ort verschwunden, an dem Begegnung, Austausch und Leben in besonderem Maße möglich waren. Klaus E. sprach immer von der „Tagesklinik“ und das trifft es ganz gut. Es wäre traurig gewesen, wenn der Brand das Ende dessen bedeutet hätte.

CP: In einem solchen Abwägungs- und Entscheidungsprozess kommen vermutlich auch immer wieder Zweifel auf. Du hast dich entschieden, den Neuaufbau der Halle, die Neukonzeption und die Führung der Halle an deine Tochter zu übergeben. Was hat dich dazu bewogen, dich aus dem operativen Teil und auch aus der gesamten Geschäftsführung zurückzuziehen?

Achim: Ich habe im Laufe der Planungen klar gemerkt, dass sich das moderne Kletterhallengeschäft immer mehr von dem entfernt hat, was Klettern für mich bedeutet. Das ist jetzt nicht negativ gemeint, sondern lediglich eine Feststellung. Diese Entwicklung hat ja durchaus auch Positives – aber da bin ich wahrscheinlich zu sehr Dinosaurier. Ich weiß noch, wie Richy und ich uns in der alten Halle immer gefragt haben, wozu man einen Bouldereinstiegskurs braucht. Das entsprach einfach nicht unserer

(Lebens-)Einstellung und wie wir mit dem Klettern umgegangen sind. Ich habe mich dann immer gefragt, was wohl als nächstes kommt...ein Kurs zum regelmäßigen Ein- und Ausatmen (lacht)? Eine moderne Halle braucht moderne Ideen und die Nische, die das alte Chimpanzodrome besetzt hatte, existierte durch den Brand nicht mehr.

Kurzum: Ich habe gemerkt, dass es zu Konflikten führen könnte, wenn ich weiterhin ein Teil der Betreibergesellschaft bleibe, und zwar nicht nur in Bezug auf Dinge, die das Klettern betreffen, sondern auch in Bezug auf meine Tochter Maite. Ein eventueller Streit mit meiner Tochter über Geschäftliches wäre das Letzte, was ich mir vorstellen wollte. So habe ich das Vertrauen in Maite und Marcel gelegt, eine zukunftsfähige Kletterhalle zu entwickeln, die den Spagat zwischen Wohlfühlatmosphäre, Verbundenheit zu den Kunden und dem nötigen kommerziellen Erfolg schafft. Dieser Spagat ist den beiden zur Zufriedenheit sehr viel gelungen. Ich bin stolz auf das, was die beiden haben entstehen lassen.

CP: Du blickst zurück auf fast 30 Jahre Branchenerfahrung und hast gleichzeitig etwas erlebt, das man niemandem wünscht. Was würdest du der Branche und den vielen jungen Hallenbetreibern mit auf den Weg geben?

Achim: Wie alles, so ist auch das Kletterhallengeschäft im steten Wandel. Ich denke bei vielen jungen Kollegen ist die Motivation, eine Kletterhalle zu betreiben, eine ähnliche wie bei uns damals: nämlich von dem zu leben, was man liebt. Reich wird man besser in anderen Branchen – reich beschenkt wird man aber durch zufriedene Kunden, die einen Teil ihres Lebens bei uns in den Kletterhallen verbringen. Das erhält man nicht mit einer Arbeitsstelle beim Finanzamt (lacht). Die machen das schon, die Jungen...anders halt! ♦

**“THE YOUNGSTERS ARE DOING GREAT...
THEY'RE JUST DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY!”**

**„DIE MACHEN DAS SCHON, DIE JUNGEN...
ANDERS HALT!”**



Photo: Guido Schröder

The Gotham Citizen - The last big event at The Cliffs at LIC right before the NYC gyms were shut down by the COVID-19 mandate.



GYM SPOTLIGHT

THE CLIFFS

AN INTERVIEW WITH MIKE WOLFERT, EMILY BUCKLEY & PAUL JUNG

INTERVIEW: MELISSA RUDICK

Photo: Lorraine Ciccarelli

In the early 2000s, Mike Wolfert quit the grind and became a full-time climbing bum. Once the novelty of life without attachments wore off, he set out to build a climbing gym in Westchester County, New York, a venture that would allow him to surround himself with climbing, share his passion with new folks, and keep his bank account healthy. Mike was able to see his dream realized in 2005. With little in the way of personal assets, he took out a bank loan, sought help from external investors, and slept in the parking lot during construction of The Cliffs Valhalla, the first climbing gym serving the region.

Nine years later, bolstered by the success of the Valhalla location, The Cliffs' second location opened in Long Island City in the New York City borough of Queens. The Cliffs has been building the brand ever since, with a sixth location set to open in Brooklyn later this year. They have also expanded outside of New York, into Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic over the last year or so haven't deterred The Cliffs from charging forward. We talk to Mike Wolfert (CEO at The Cliffs), Emily Buckley (COO), and Paul Jung (Senior Director of Route Setting) about growth and resilience and find out what has kept The Cliffs open and going strong during such a challenging and unpredictable period.

RSM: What did the onset of the COVID-19 crisis look like at The Cliffs?

The Cliffs: Outside of California, the state of New York had one of the most prolonged shutdowns in the United States. Our priority was keeping our staff on the payroll; and we managed to pay everyone, including part-timers, for four full months while closed before having to resort to using furloughs and layoffs. It was a rough time for everyone, but we also saw amazing acts by our community along the way. Almost half of our members voluntarily continued to pay their membership dues, which allowed us to support our remaining staff and manage our expenses – the support and strength of our community is one of the reasons we're all so passionate about climbing.

RSM: Did the challenges you faced lead to any significant changes?

The Cliffs: Successfully navigating the "new normal" as a business post-COVID depends on how well you're able to change course, how you can adapt your business model, and how you can reimagine your profit centers. Over the course of the last 18 months, we've had to read-just our approach from all angles. While we were closed, we focused on retaining membership, offering outdoor activities to regain some

revenue, providing curbside retail services, creating online services, and maintaining communication with our community.

Once we were able to open again after being closed for a total of seven months, we underwent some major operational changes to follow state mandates and best practices for our community, implementing measures such as personal protective equipment (PPE), contact tracing, capacity limitation, a reservation system, rental gear sanitization, free liquid chalk stations, proper signage in the facilities, controlling the flow of traffic, and scheduling in teams in case anyone on staff got sick.

As mentioned earlier, we've also unfortunately had to navigate heart-breaking layoffs and ultimately restructure our organizational chart to maximize our chances of survival and levels of efficiency. Each week of this pandemic has presented another challenge. We've been resilient by remaining agile and open to change.

"EACH WEEK OF THIS PANDEMIC HAS PRESENTED ANOTHER CHALLENGE. WE'VE BEEN RESILIENT BY REMAINING AGILE AND OPEN TO CHANGE."

RSM: Has route setting changed in New York City or in the rest of the United States over the last year or so?

The Cliffs: The craft of route setting is always evolving and revolving. Trends come and go and it's awesome to see what was hot ten years ago coming back around again. It's this hybrid of old school and new school that makes route setting so fun and intriguing. As climbers and setters, it keeps you on your toes and keeps the craft from going stale. It's exciting to see that there's always a new trick in everyone's bucket.

When we first reopened, there were some concerns about what the day-to-day running of the business would look like. There were uncertainties about how COVID was being transmitted and, as with many businesses, we were given little government guidance. Even the officials seemed to be confused and were asking similar questions to the ones being asked by our staff and members: Can you catch it from touching holds? What about using shared tools? Will it be aerosolized by power washing holds? Because we were making decisions based on the unknown, we practiced social distancing and implemented strict PPE protocols, following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We learned to adapt to the new norm.

Another major change we've noticed, specifically in New York City, is the number of new gyms opening! We love to see this expansion from an industry perspective. However, the demand for experienced route



Routesetters talking about what to "tweak" at the newest location, The Cliffs at Gowanus.

Photo: Lorraine Ciccarelli

setters has increased while the supply has remained the same, resulting in difficulty staffing a full team. We are fortunate, though, that we are proactive and already have our route setting training programs in place, which are helping to shape the next generation of route setters. This has helped us to get ahead of the game.

RSM: How have you been able to continue growing as a business throughout this period?

The Cliffs: This year has been tough for any in-person business, but we've managed to survive. Across all of our gyms we've seen growth in different areas, from youth programs to membership sales. We've seen some successful innovation from our teams at each facility. The pandemic has also forced us to learn how we can transform the way we run our business. Before the pandemic, we had no idea we would be running yoga classes and meetings via Zoom, but we've adapted! It's been amazing to see how we as a company and community can continue to grow closer and learn together despite all the challenges and barriers we've had to face.

We were able to open a new location in Harlem in February 2021, and while a pandemic certainly does not offer the most ideal of conditions for opening a new gym, we are putting a lot of effort into making sure it succeeds. We are also in the final stages of building another gym –



Halloween Headlamp Party - One of the most fun and community-driven nights at The Cliffs at Valhalla.

Photo: Emily Wooley

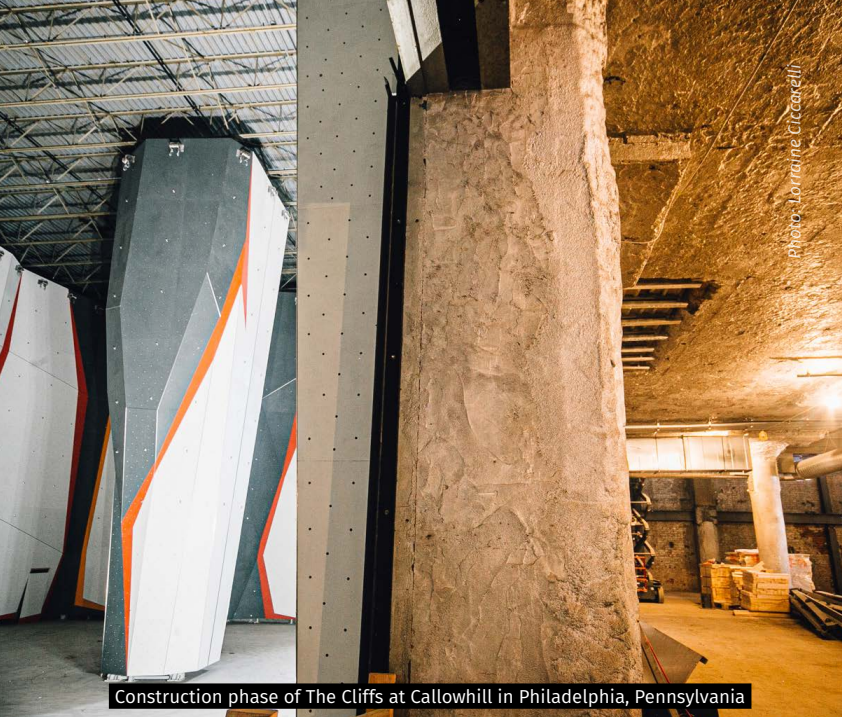


Photo: Lorraine Ciccarelli

Construction phase of The Cliffs at Callowhill in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

“YOU CAN UNFREEZE MY ACCOUNT AND RE-ACTIVATE MY MEMBERSHIP. I AM AWARE THAT YOU ARE STILL CLOSED BECAUSE OF COVID-19, BUT I WANT TO SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR STAFF DURING THIS TIME. SO PLEASE KEEP MY MEMBERSHIP ACTIVE. THANK YOU.”



a behemoth space located in Gowanus, Brooklyn, which we think will elevate the entire brand.

RSM: How do you envisage the future of climbing gyms in the United States?

The Cliffs: It feels like the growth of climbing gyms hasn't skipped a beat, even during the pandemic. Climbing, especially indoors, has exploded in popularity over the past few years, and its inclusion in the Olympics is only going to make it more popular. As more gyms open in major cities, more underrepresented groups will be introduced to climbing and become climbers. The cultural balance of the climbing scene is shifting towards more equity and diversity, which is a good thing. The future of climbing and climbing gyms looks bright.

RSM: Where would you like to see more change at an industry level?

The Cliffs: As the industry continues to grow, especially in urban settings, there are many improvements that will likely accompany that growth. At The Cliffs, we have bolstered our Human Resources department by hiring our first ever Senior Director of Human Resources and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This is to ensure that, as we grow as a business, we keep our employees at the forefront.

With the industry growing, we also want to encourage a higher level of professionalism across the board. This includes creating fair, equitable, and clear career paths for our current employees, as well as recruiting from outside of the industry to help diversify the experience and knowledge we have on our teams. We're looking forward to seeing our growing industry continue to evolve in these ways. 🍋

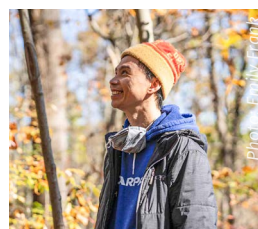
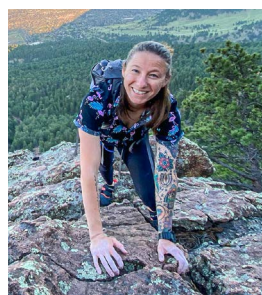


Mike Wolfert – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

After several successful ventures early on in his career in the fields of marketing and technology, Mike discovered Yosemite National Park and climbing. He left his job, his apartment, and life as he knew it to become a full-time climber. During this time, he appeared on an adventure TV series called "Global Extremes". He eventually wound up back in his home state of New York, where he began building his first gym, The Cliffs at Valhalla, so that he could "be immersed in climbing and get a decent shower".

Emily Buckley – Chief Operating Officer (COO)

Emily is starting her fourth year at The Cliffs after a long stint working in operations within the CrossFit industry. Her professional transition from CrossFit to indoor climbing gyms was mostly a matter of learning how to climb, as both have a similar business element: member-based revenue and a focus on community and lifestyle. When Emily joined The Cliffs, the existing staff invested time in teaching Emily the ropes; everything from tying a knot to leading sport and climbing multi-pitch routes! She is deeply appreciative of their passion to share climbing with her. Her favorite place to climb is Ten Sleep in Wyoming (pockets + limestone = dreamy). She also enjoys peak bagging and mountain biking with her adventure pup, Lily! Emily is psyched about The Cliffs' recent growth and looks forward to seeing the company's continued success.



Paul Jung – Senior Director of Route Setting

Paul started climbing at his home crag at The Gunks, New York in 2003. Climbing basically took over his life and he moved to New Paltz, New York to be closer to climbing. In Paul's words, "The Gunks is truly a special place and everyone should have an opportunity to experience it". Fast forward to 2009, Paul made a career change and found himself working for The Cliffs at Valhalla - the very first gym opened by The Cliffs. Having worked his way up to Senior Director of Route Setting, Paul currently oversees the route setting departments at six different locations, where he collaborates with many amazing and creative people. Paul continues to work at The Cliffs, twelve years and counting.



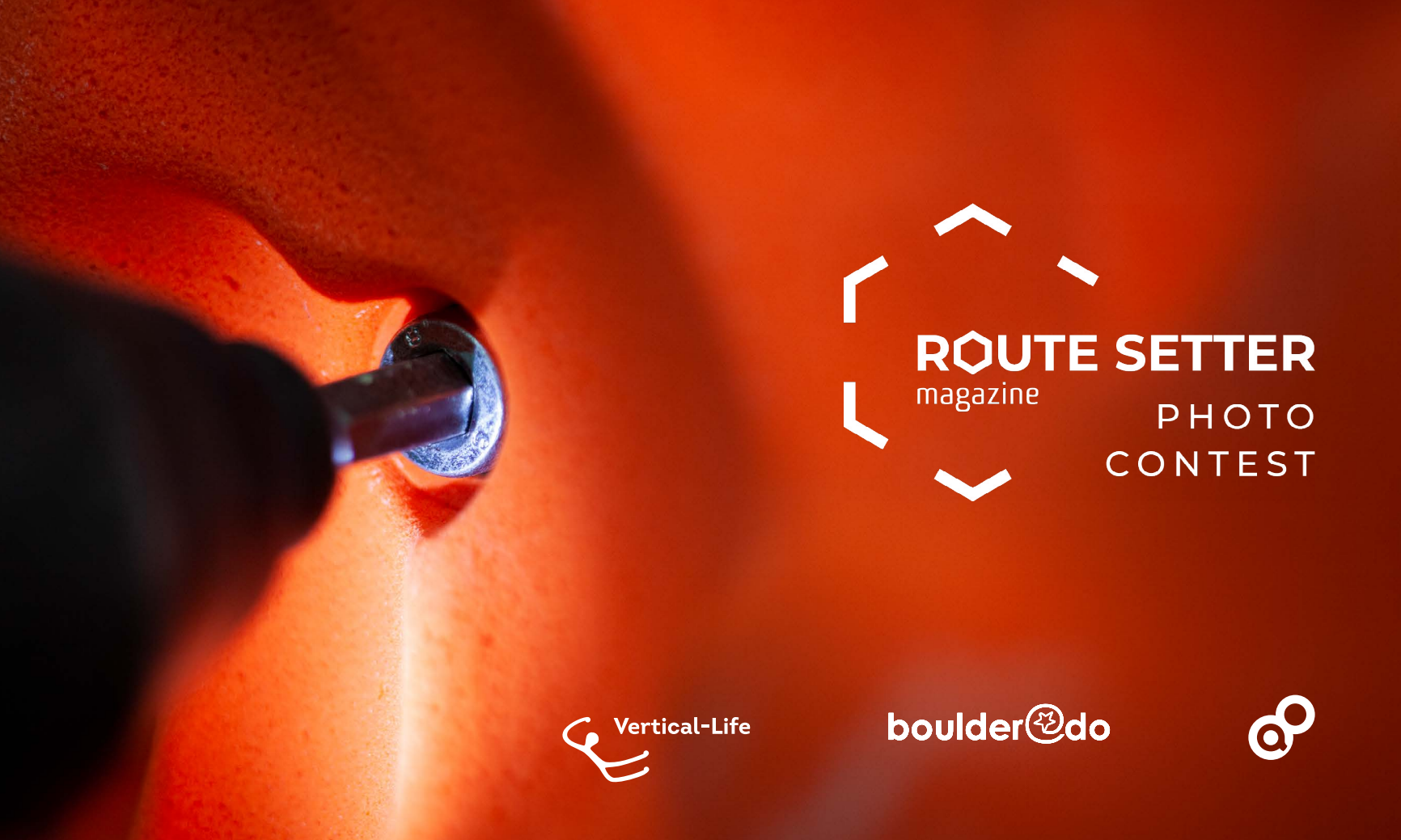
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**iQ SERIES AUTO BELAY
THE FUTURE OF INDOOR CLIMBING**

The TRUBLUE iQ is the next great standard in auto belay technology. With a lighter frame, more durable components, and improved retraction, the TRUBLUE iQ makes life easier for gym owners, and more enjoyable for climbers. Purchase the TRUBLUE iQ today and have the option to upgrade to iQ+ with Catch-and-Hold technology in 2022.

Learn more at trubluclimbing.com/iQ





ROUTE SETTER
 magazine PHOTO
 CONTEST



RSM PHOTO CONTEST 2021

CELEBRATING THE ART OF ROUTE SETTING

In mid-July, we kicked off our first Route Setter Magazine Photo Contest to celebrate the artistry, hard work, and talent that go into route setting. We asked the public to vote for their favorite photos. A panel of judges then selected the best photos to be featured in this year's issue of Route Setter Magazine. Together with Boulderado, we crowned the grand prize winner, awarding them and the runners-up with prizes.

We hope that you enjoy looking at the photo gallery on the following pages. Stay tuned for details of the next Route Setter Magazine Photo Contest!

JUDGES' PANEL:



REINI FICHTINGER
 Photographer & IFSC Routesetter



SARAH BURMESTER
 Editor at Klettern Magazine



VERENA HINTZENSTERN
 CEO at Boulderado



EGLE KIRDULYTE
 Head of Visual Communication at Vertical-Life



1ST PLACE

GET A GRIP
 by Julie Veda Stokes (Brand Director)

Get a Grip features Randy Hill and Chandler Daniels visualizing their lead climbs.

Vertical View Climbing Gym,
 Meridian, Idaho, USA

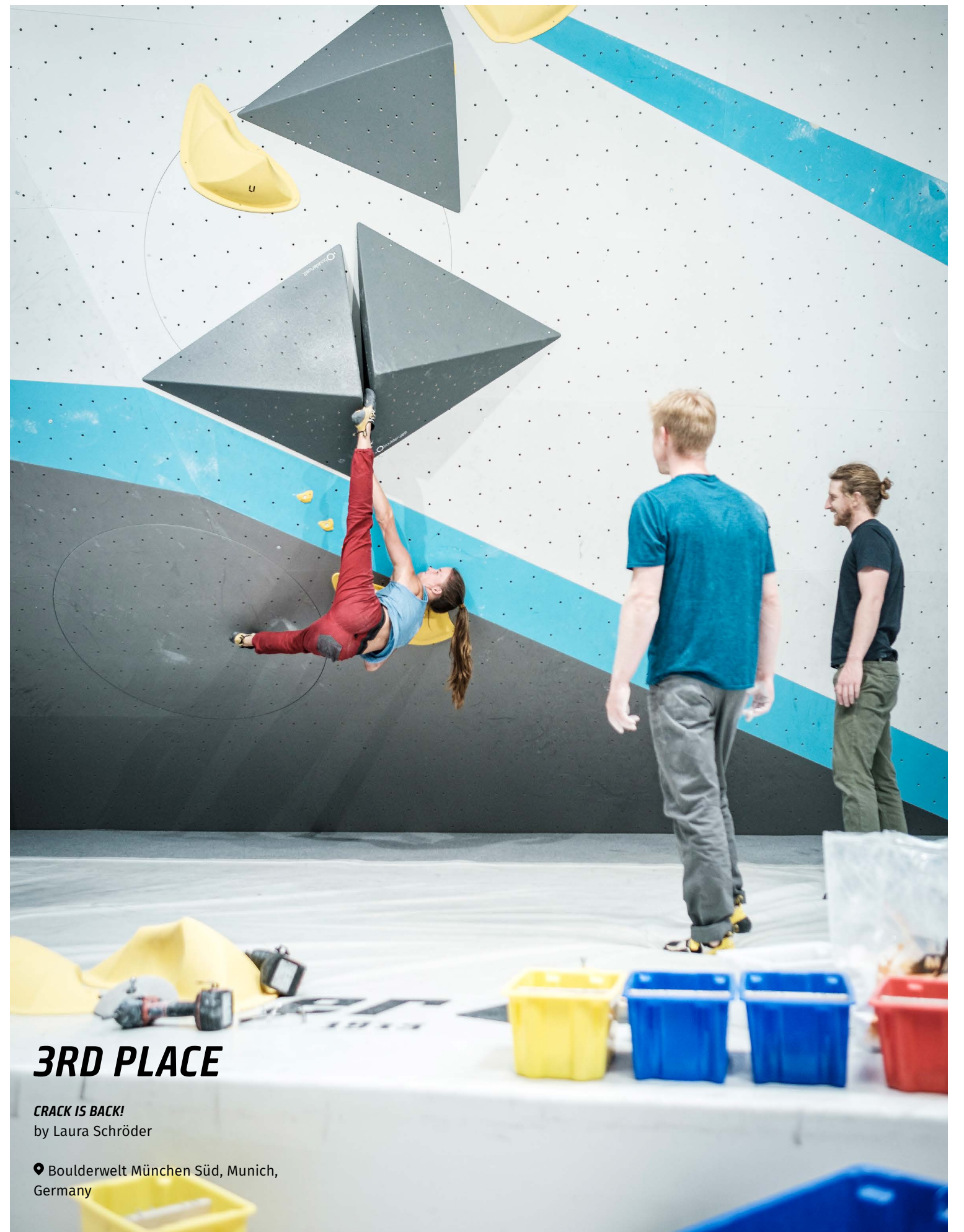


2ND PLACE

THE ART OF ROUTE SETTING
by Patricia Valero Mayo (Student)

Dani Pajarillo focuses on creating a boulder problem.

📍 Climbat X-Madrid, Spain



3RD PLACE

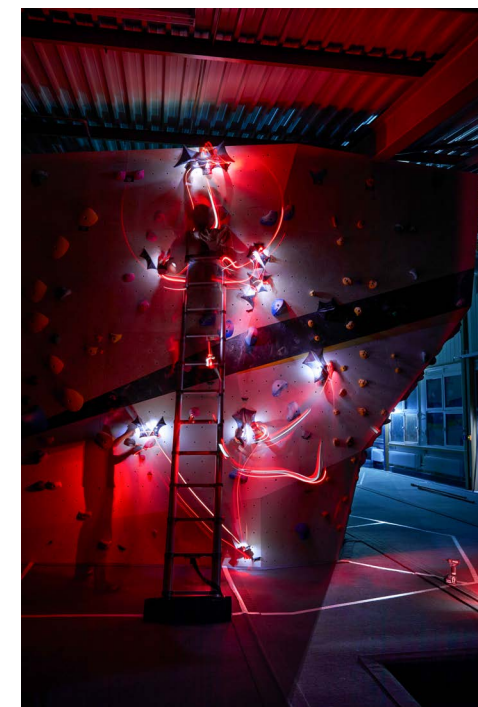
CRACK IS BACK!
by Laura Schröder

📍 Boulderwelt München Süd, Munich,
Germany



CREATIVE ENLIGHTENMENT
by Vladek Zumr (Photographer and Social Media Manager)

📍 Kletterzentrum Gaswerk Schlieren, Schlieren, Switzerland



NOCTURNAL IN THE BAT CAVE
by Adrian Flaig (Shaper & Route Setter)

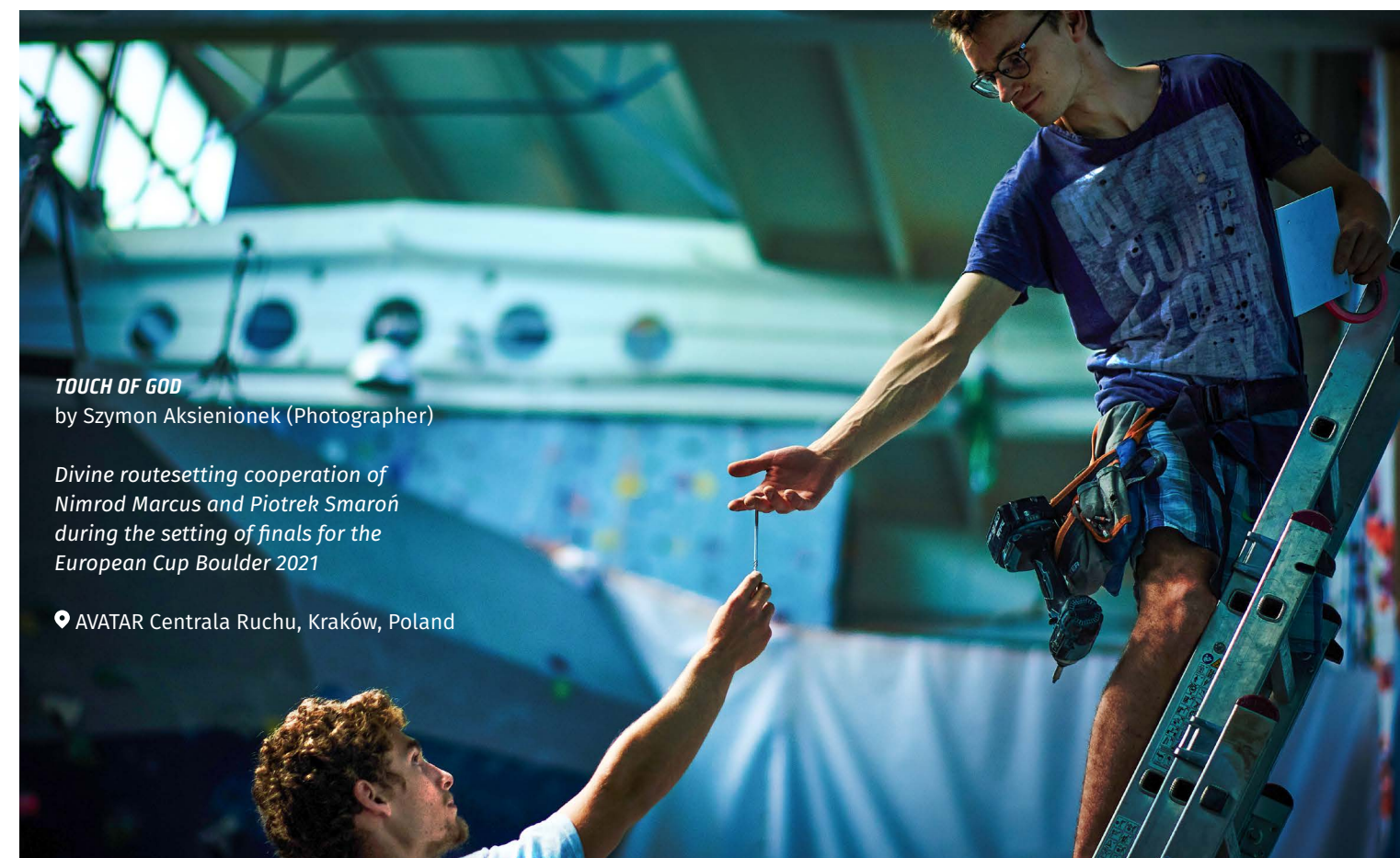
Motion blur of setting with bats

📍 Steinbock Konstanz, Germany

THE MIND OF A SETTER
by Garrett Fache & James Couture (Photographer & Artist)

Setting has such Left Brain mathematical aspects and geometry, yet is an art of Right Brain creativity, flow, and movement. This photo encapsulates the inner complexities of the setter's Brain.

📍 Hive Climbing & Fitness, Winnipeg, Canada



TOUCH OF GOD
by Szymon Aksienonek (Photographer)

Divine routesetting cooperation of Nimrod Marcus and Piotrek Smaroń during the setting of finals for the European Cup Boulder 2021

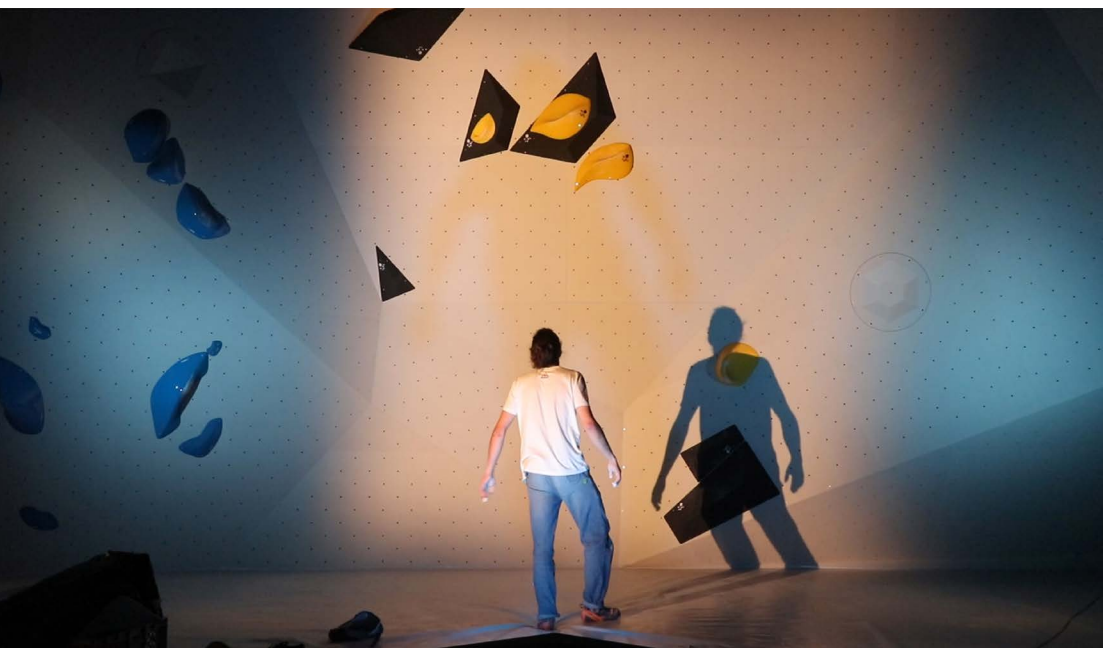
📍 AVATAR Centrala Ruchu, Kraków, Poland



David Schweizer (Photographer)

Route setting for the finals of the boulder Swiss Climbing Cup 2019, Julia Anderegg (left), Kaddi Lehmann (right)

📍 B2 Pratteln, Switzerland



SEBASTIAN KNABE'S SHADOW
by Sérgio de Jesus (Photographer)

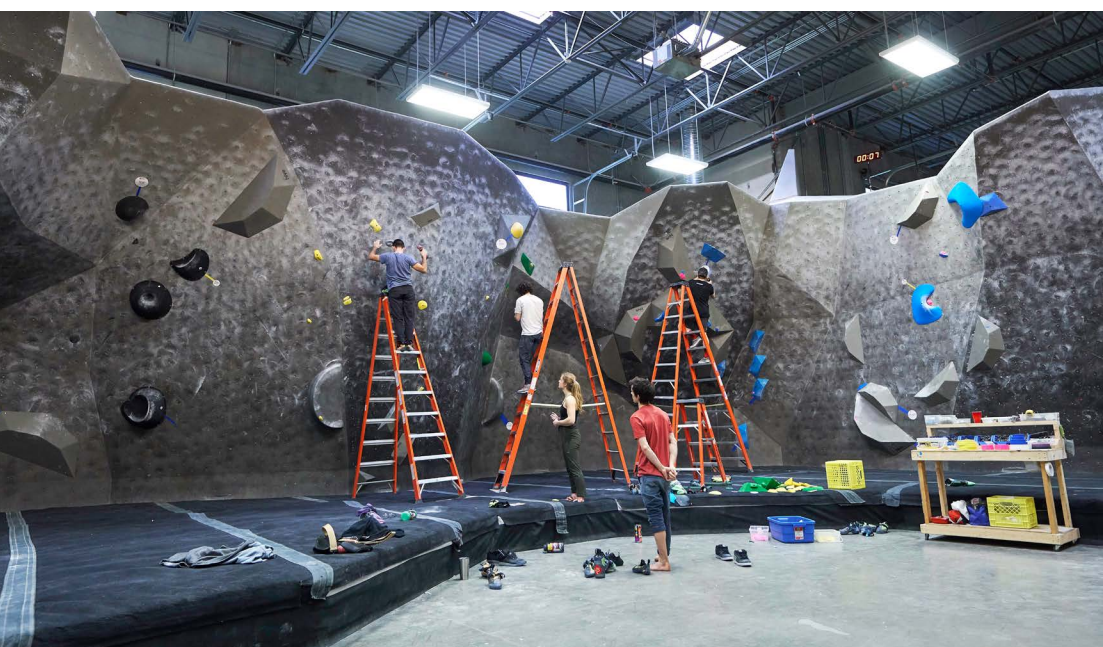
📍 Stuntwerk Rosenheim, Germany



SAFETY FIRST
by Thomas Lindinger (Routesetter/
Photo- and Videographer)

Julius Kerscher in action

📍 DAV Kletter- und Boulderzentrum
München-Süd, Germany



THE PROCESS
by Evgenii Kozhushko (Head Route Setter)

*Typical organized chaos of the climbing
competition scene.*

📍 The Hive North Shore, Vancouver, Canada



A SETTER'S ASCENT
by Ian Coll (Grizzly Holds Owner & Route Setter)

*Setting the Grizzly Holds photo shoot in
the brand new Grand River Rock Waterloo
climbing gym!*

📍 Grand River Rocks, Waterloo, Canada



ROUND AND ROUND
by Olivier Dumas (Professional Route Setter)

*Loick Martel-Magnan during forerunning of
the boulders set for the opening of Délire's
Pierre-Bertrand gym.*

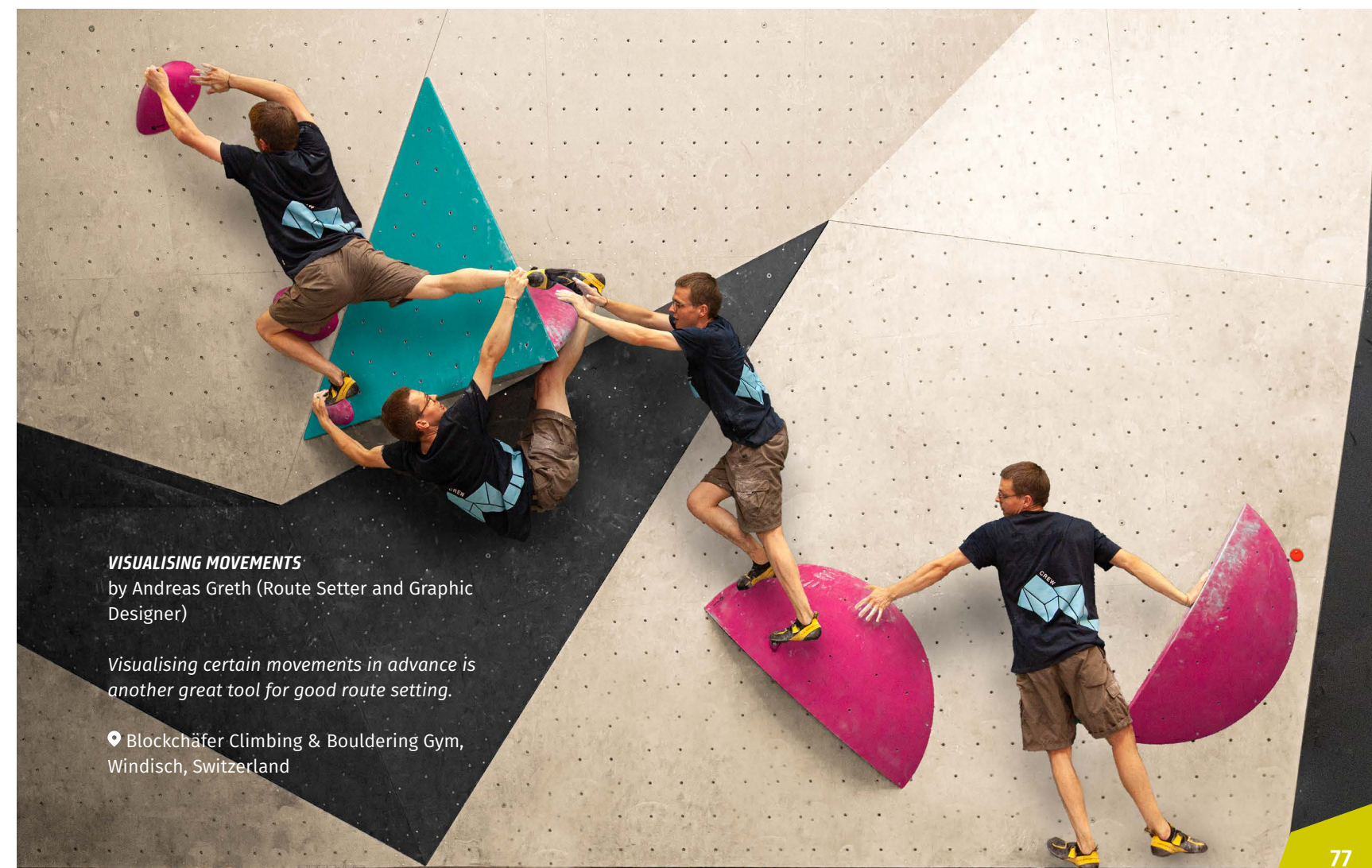
📍 Délire Pierre-Bertrand, Canada



SHAPES & LAYERS
by Mike Taret (Head Route Setter)

Looking through the Portal.

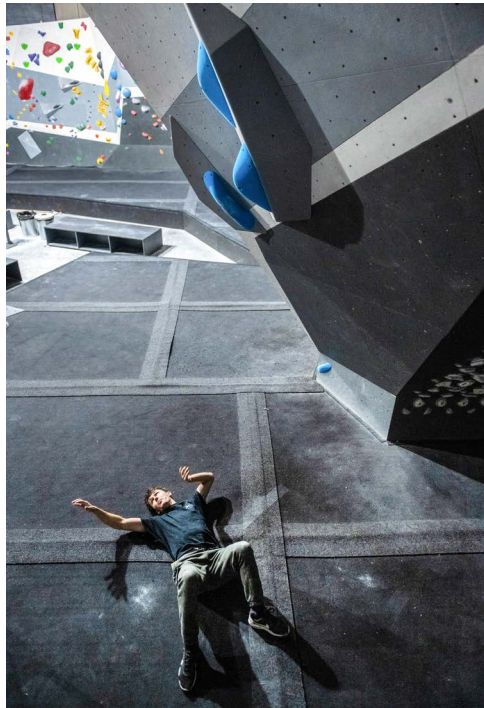
📍 Brooklyn Boulders Lincoln Park, Chicago,
Illinois, USA



VISUALISING MOVEMENTS
by Andreas Greth (Route Setter and Graphic
Designer)

*Visualising certain movements in advance is
another great tool for good route setting.*

📍 Blockchäfer Climbing & Bouldering Gym,
Windisch, Switzerland



Adrian Mascenon (Gym Manager)

Kai Watkins exhausted after a late night setting session.

📍 Climb Fit Kirrawee, NSW, Australia



DIGGING ROOM

by Christof Wolf

📍 Swoboda Alpin DAV Kempten Kempten, Germany



by Nikita Tsarev (Gym Owner)

📍 Luzhniki, Moscow, Russia



ANGLES

by Matthias Blanke (Route Setter)

📍 BiG – Bouldern in Göttingen

Guillaume (Routesetter)

📍 Block'Out Lyon, France



by Nikita Tsarev (Gym Owner)

📍 Luzhniki, Moscow, Russia



W4

by Szymon Aksienionek (Photographer)

Olga Niemiec puts the markings on the fourth final route for women at the European Cup Boulder 2021.

📍 AVATAR Centrala Ruchu, Kraków, Poland

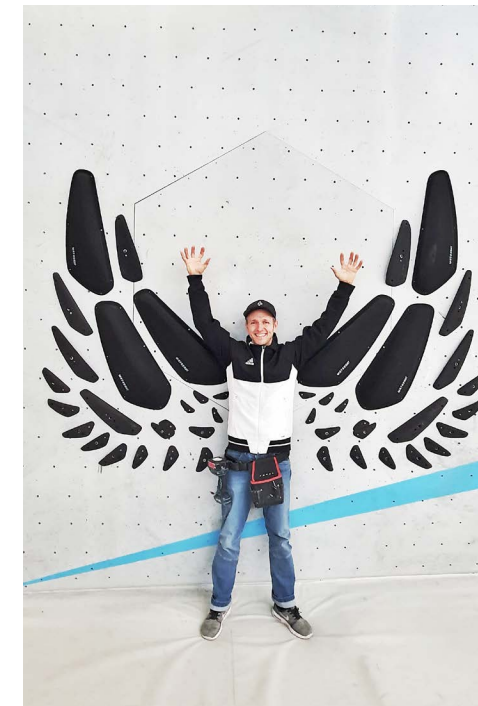




THREAD SETTING SESSIONS
by Jeffrey Shor (Marketing Manager)

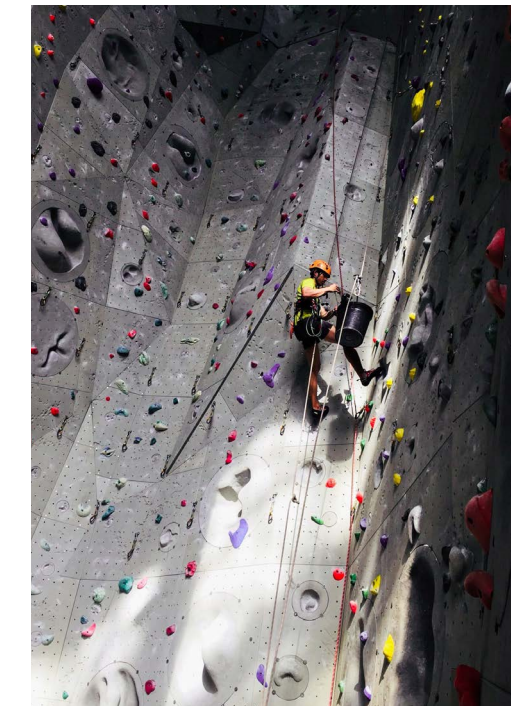
📍 Sportrock Climbing Centers, Alexandria, Virginia, USA

CROWD VOTING TOP 3 IMAGES



ROUTESETTING FREES MY MIND
by Marc Stellbogen (Head of Routesetting)

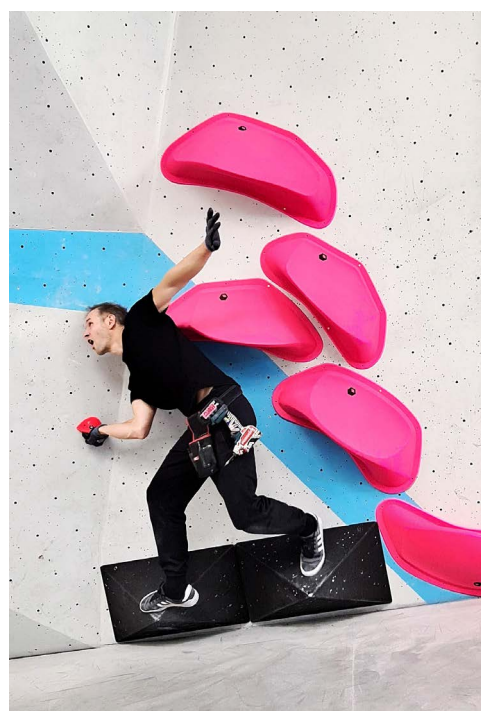
📍 Boulderwelt Frankfurt, Germany



BEHIND THE ART
by Andrian Mohd Yusof (National Routesetter Malaysia)

Every route comes with different art and feeling.

📍 Camp5, Malaysia



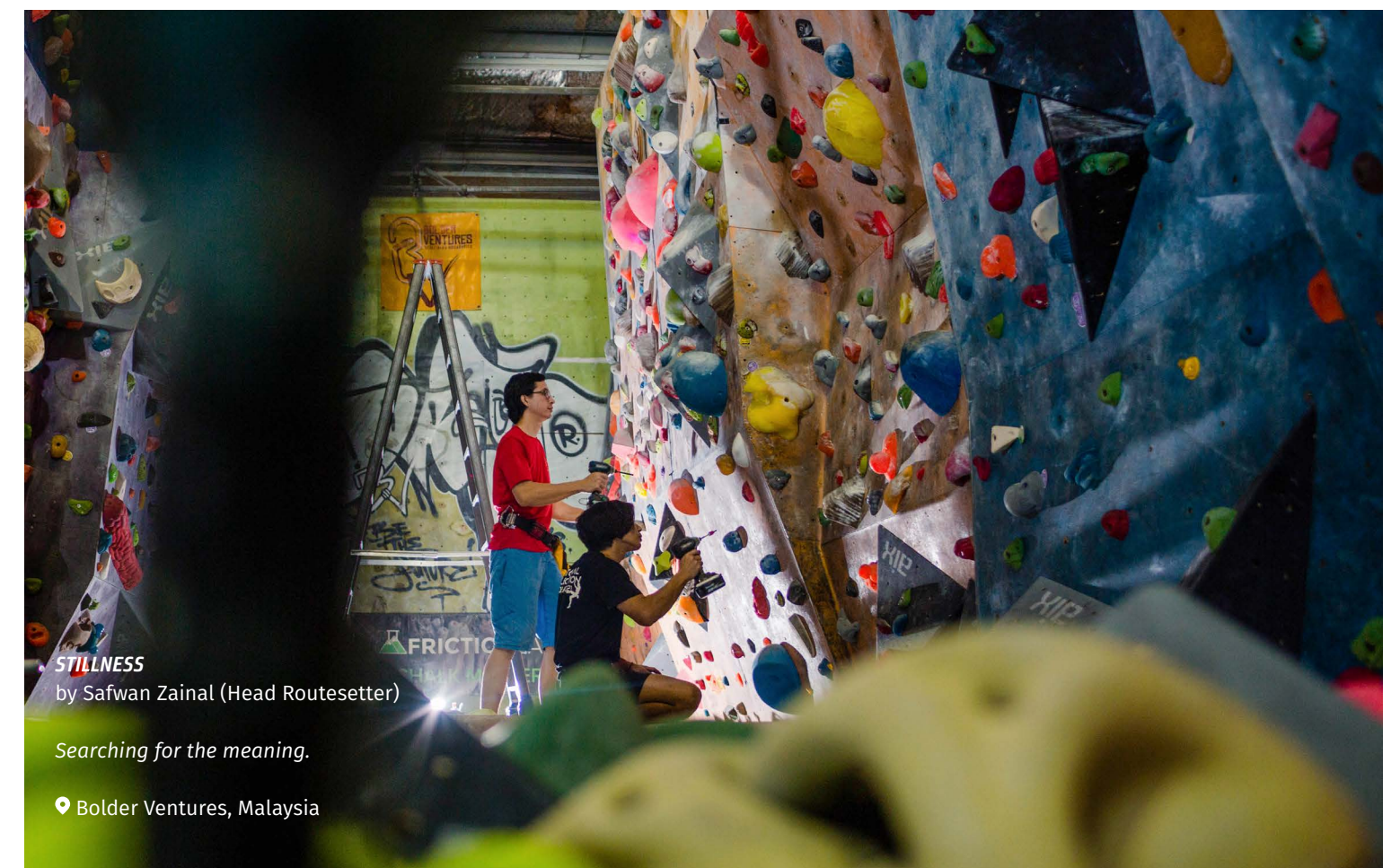
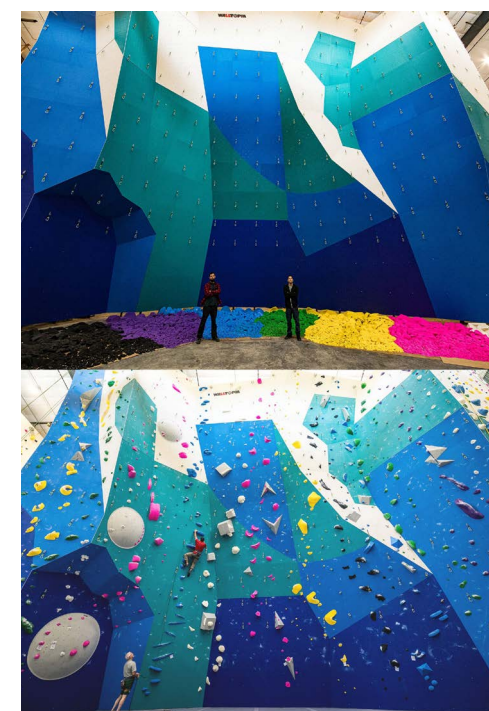
365 DAYS AND COUNTING
by Andre Hoyos (Head Routesetter)

Empowering a community with passion, persistence, and perseverance.

📍 Gritstone Climbing + Fitness Morgantown, West Virginia, USA

GLIDING THROUGH THE WAVES
by Marc Stellbogen (Head of Route Setting)

📍 Boulderwelt Frankfurt, Germany



STILLNESS
by Safwan Zainal (Head Routesetter)

Searching for the meaning.

📍 Bolder Ventures, Malaysia

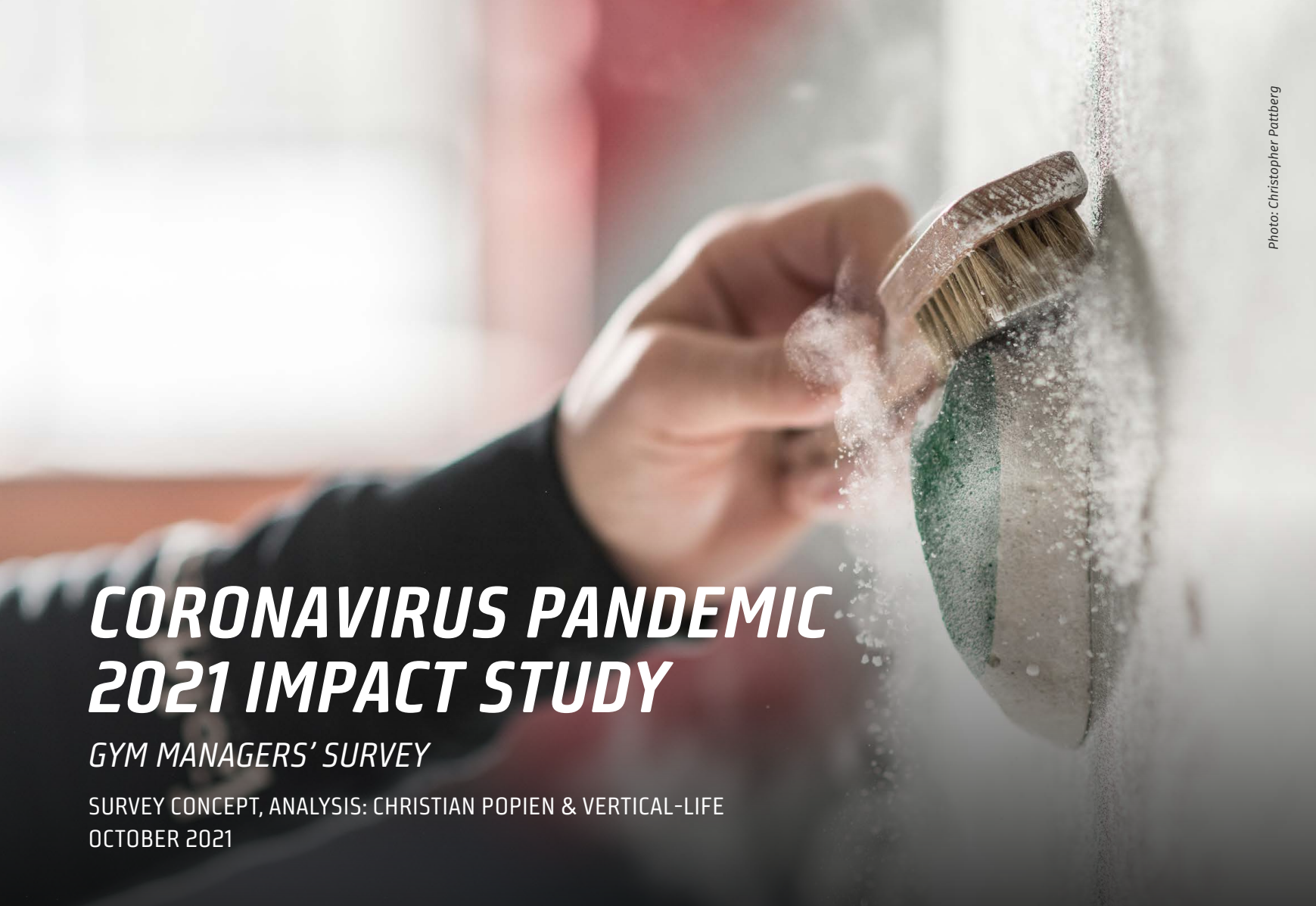


Photo: Christopher Pattberg

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC 2021 IMPACT STUDY

GYM MANAGERS' SURVEY

SURVEY CONCEPT, ANALYSIS: CHRISTIAN POPIEN & VERTICAL-LIFE
OCTOBER 2021

Following on from our 2020 survey on the conditions faced by the indoor climbing industry after and during the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to focus on this topic again this year by asking climbing gym operators around the world about the current situation and how they have fared over the past few months.

Like last time, our aim this year was not to present comprehensive data and in-depth analyses, but rather to build a picture of the prevailing mood. This year's results are based on answers from 95 gym operators. In some cases, we were also able to compare the responses with those received in 2020.

For many members of the indoor climbing industry, the past 12 months have gone differently to how we anticipated they would back in September 2020.

In fall 2020, 55% of the respondents thought that there would not be any further lockdowns. However, many climbing gyms had to close their doors again just a few weeks after the publication of the third issue of Route Setter Magazine and our results.

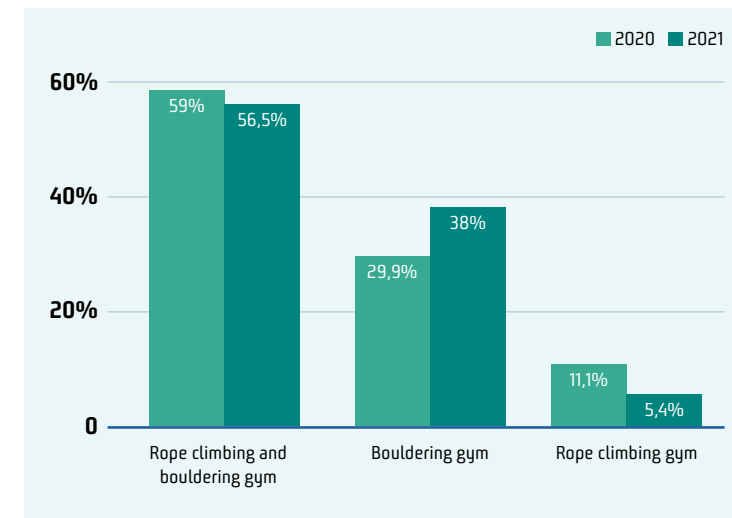
The results of this year's survey show that over 75% of operators had to close their gyms at least twice due to the pandemic. The considerable extent to which the indoor climbing industry was affected is reflected by the fact that almost 60% of operators reported having to close their gyms for longer than six months.

Despite the various forms of state aid made available, the long periods of closure resulted in almost 64% of operators having to take on new liabilities of between 30,000 and 300,000 euros. Even operators who were permitted to reopen their gyms continued to be subject to restrictions and could only let in a limited number of visitors at a time. In September 2021, just under 62% of respondents stated that they still could not operate their gyms at full capacity. Given these figures, we are very pleased to report that more than 73% claimed that they could still operate profitably.

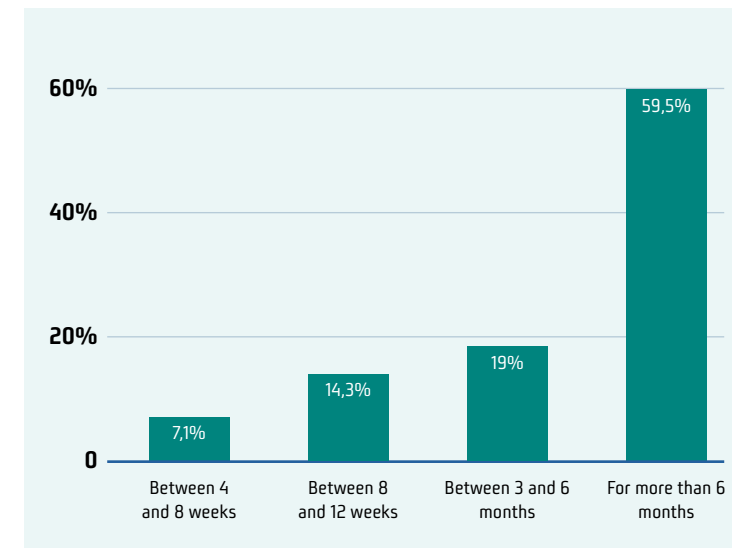
On the whole, the responses indicate that the industry is looking to the future with confidence despite this difficult, challenging period. The overwhelming majority of respondents are convinced that our industry will recover quickly. However, the huge wave of euphoria expected after sport climbing made its Olympic debut does not seem to have materialized. Over 50% of the respondents agreed with the following statement: "It remains to be seen to what extent the presence at the Olympics will have an impact on the indoor climbing industry." Despite this, or perhaps because of this, everyone has now eagerly turned their attention towards Paris 2024.

We will keep a close eye on developments over the next 12 months and in the next issue hope to be able to report in detail on how quickly and positively the indoor climbing industry has bounced back from the pandemic.

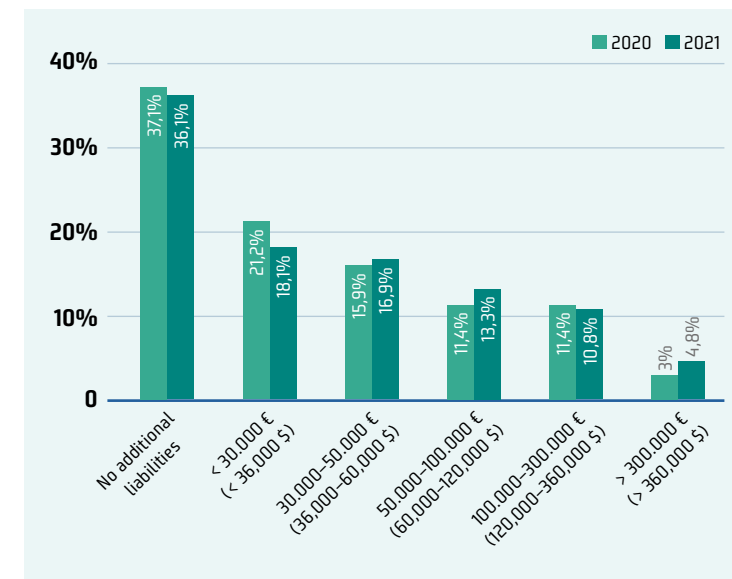
WHAT TYPE OF GYM DO YOU RUN?



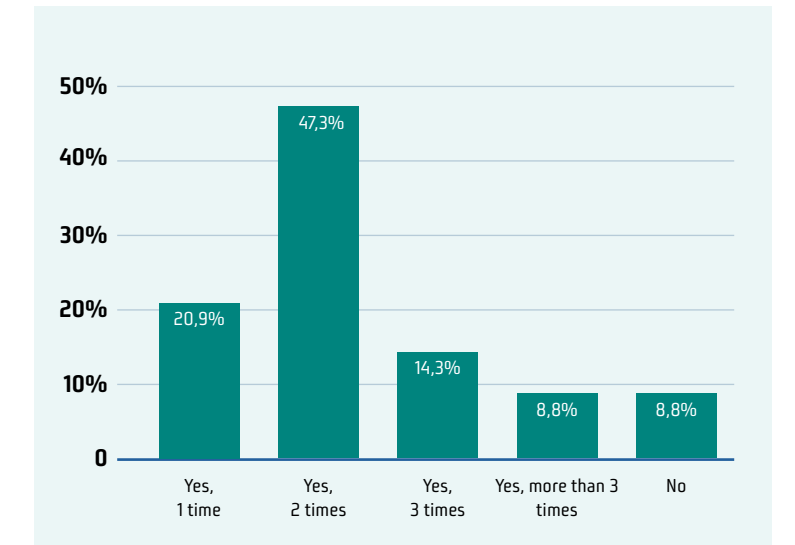
HOW LONG WAS THE GYM CLOSED IN TOTAL?



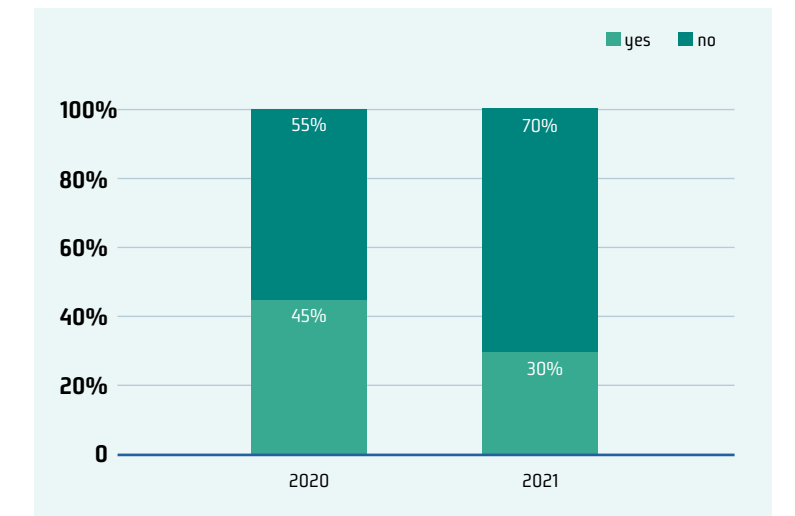
WHAT AMOUNT OF PURE LIABILITIES HAVE YOU BUILT UP THROUGH DEFERRALS OR NEW LOANS DUE TO THE COVID PANDEMIC?



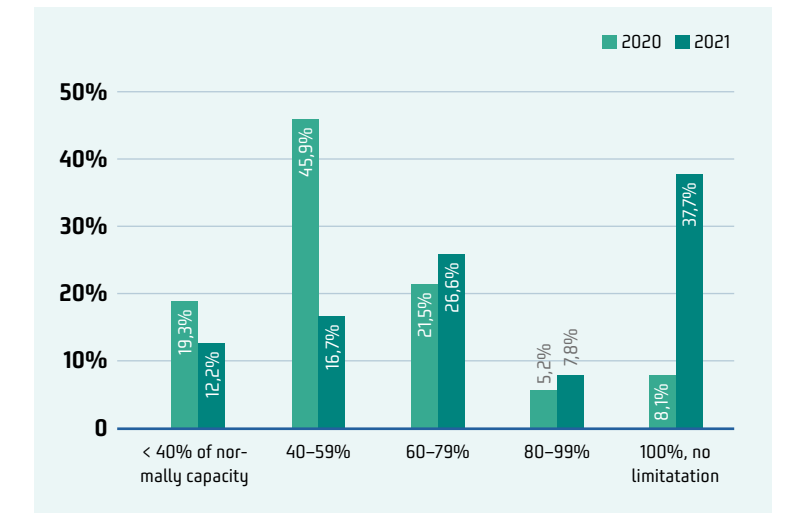
DID YOUR GYM HAVE TO BE CLOSED DUE TO A LOCKDOWN? IF YES, HOW OFTEN - HOW MANY TIMES OVER THE COURSE OF THE ENTIRE PANDEMIC?



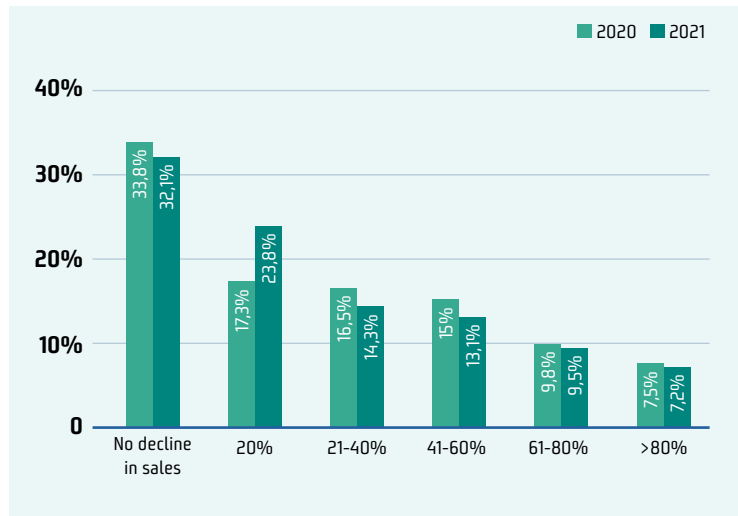
DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE A LOCKDOWN AND/OR FORCED CLOSURE OF THE GYM DURING THE COMING AUTUMN/WINTER?



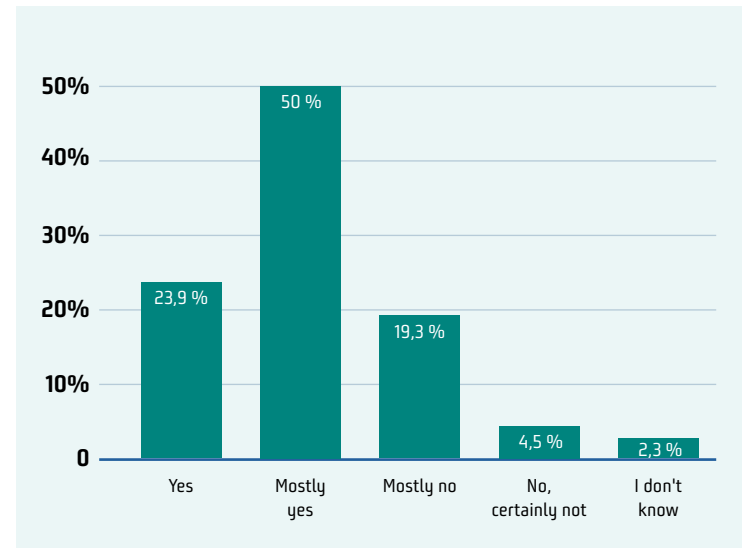
ARE YOUR GYM OPERATIONS LIMITED TO A CERTAIN MAXIMUM CAPACITY AT THE MOMENT?



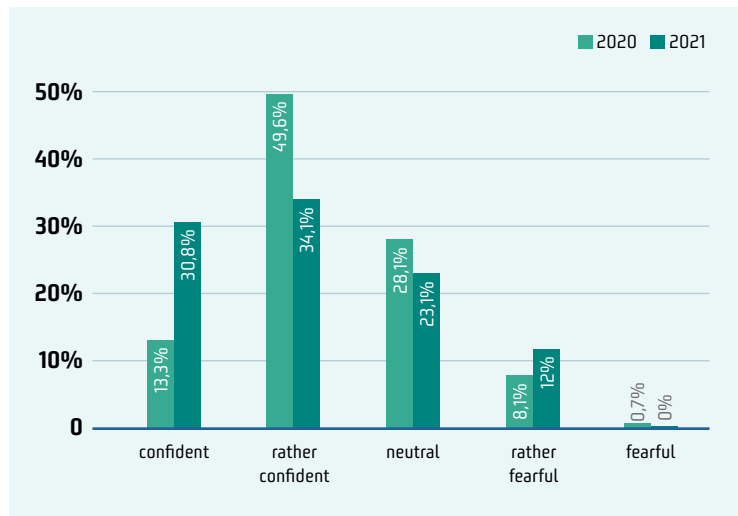
HOW GREAT WAS THE DECLINE IN SALES SINCE REOPENING COMPARED TO THE REFERENCE MONTHS BEFORE THE PANDEMIC?



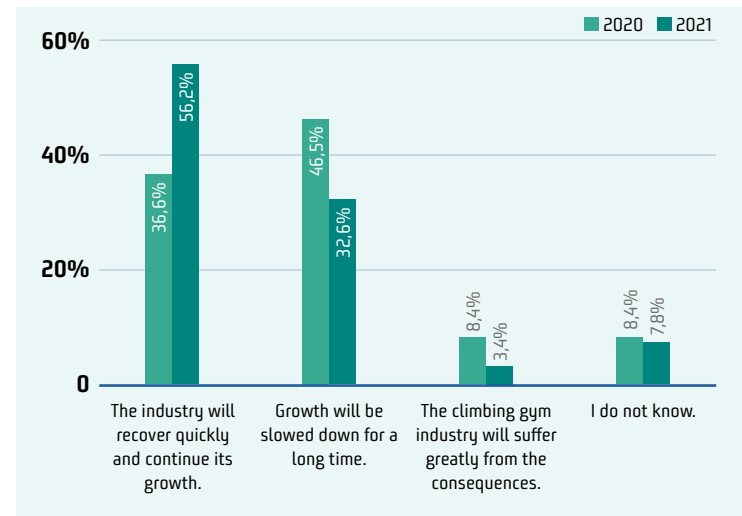
IS IT POSSIBLE FOR YOUR GYM TO OPERATE PROFITABLY UNDER THE CURRENT CONDITIONS?



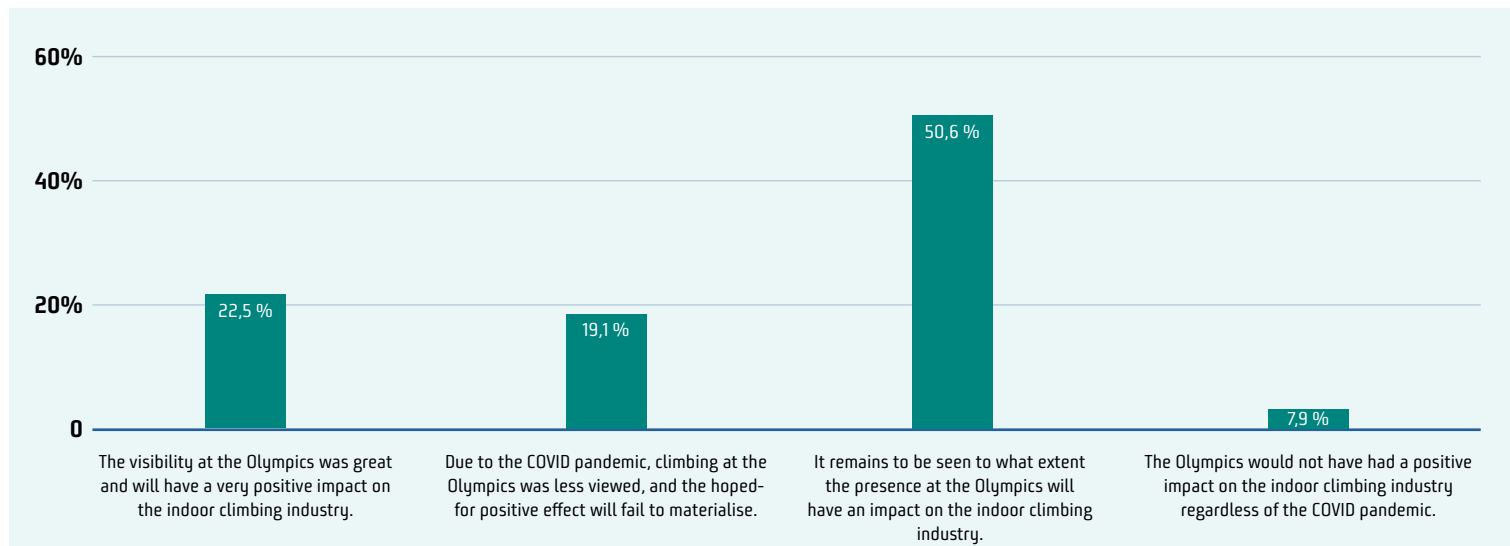
HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE GENERAL MOOD OF YOUR VISITORS IN VIEW OF THE DANGERS POSED BY THE PANDEMIC?




HOW DO YOU THINK THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE COVID PANDEMIC WILL AFFECT THE INDOOR CLIMBING INDUSTRY IN YOUR COUNTRY IN THE LONG RUN?




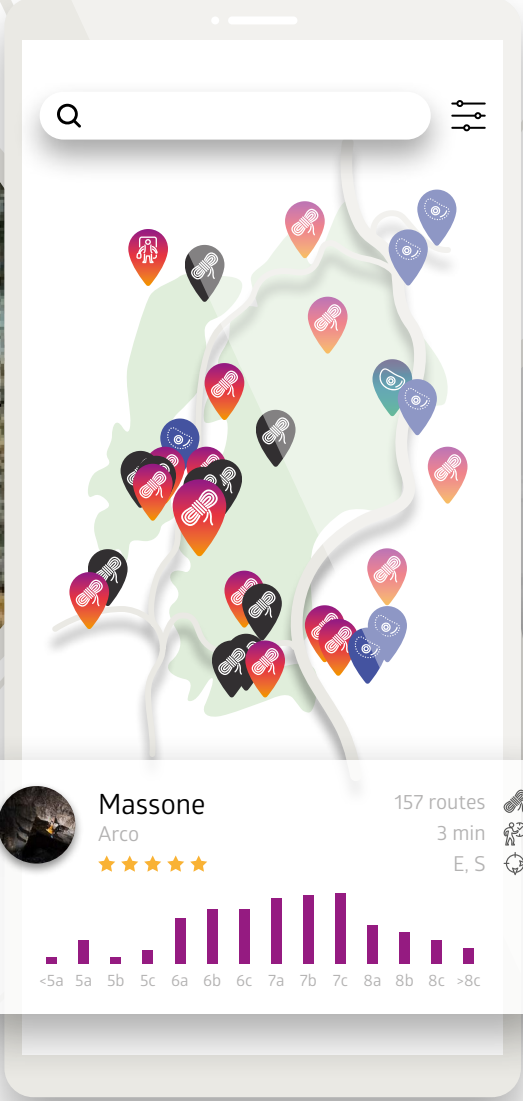

SPORT CLIMBING WAS PRESENT AS AN OLYMPIC DISCIPLINE FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE TOKYO GAMES. WHICH STATEMENT ABOUT THE IMPACT ON THE INDUSTRY WOULD YOU MOST AGREE WITH?







Vertical-Life

Your worldwide climbing guide









5 000+
Craggs with topos




20 600+
Community route lists



360 000+
Registered users



320+
Smart Climbing gyms



2 000+
Climbing gyms



10.1 GYM STATION CLASSIC ROPE

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 and the specific lengths for gym use.

Length: 40 / 50 / 150 / 300 m
UIAA-falls (single rope 80 kg): 8
Weight / m: 67 g
Impact force: 8.4 kN



CRIMPER BRUSH

The Grimper Brush is made from natural wild boar hair for long-lasting durability and gentle brushing that doesn't damage or polish the rock. The shaft is made from recycled plastic and has an ergonomically designed handle for optimal grip. The angled brush head ensures easy handling. It is suitable for bouldering and rope climbing.

Colors: black



GYM PRINT CHALK BAG

Thanks to the large zipper pocket, this stylish chalk bag offers enough space to hold a smartphone and valuables. The outer materials are made from recycled polyester lined with high-quality fleece on the inside. Features such as a brush holder, an adjustable waist strap, and a shape-retaining opening make the freestanding Gym Print Chalk Bag a practical companion in the climbing gym.

Colors: vibrant orange, black, granit



4 SLIDE HARNESS

The comfortable 4 Slide Harness is an all-round climbing harness with very easy handling and ideal for beginners and expert climbers. Its four Slide-Bloc buckles are easy to use and allow flexible adjustment to every body size and situation. In addition, a red material woven into the tie-in loop ensures extra safety. Should the fabric be damaged by wear and tear, the red color shines through and alerts climbers to potential risk.

Sizes: XS-M / M-XL
Weight: 490 g
Colors: vibrant orange-black, dark ceramic, black



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 almost 160 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.

TOGIR 2.0 3 SLIDE HARNESS

The Togir 2.0 3 Slide Harness is a multifunctional all-rounder perfect for all types of climbing. This new harness has the same safety features with a range of improvements for even more comfort and durability – such as optimized weight distribution. The extra flat, lightweight construction maximizes the freedom of movement. The Togir 2.0 is also leading the way when it comes to sustainable production practices and is bluesign®-certified.

Sizes: S-XL (men) / XS – L (women)
Weight: 377 g
Colors: marine (men) / blood red (women)



LIQUID CHALK PEPPERMINT

The remedy for acrid odors in the climbing gym: liquid magnesium with a pleasant peppermint scent. Liquid Chalk Peppermint is an ideal extra-dry base layer and offers maximum friction for climbing and bouldering without clouds of dust. The liquid magnesium guarantees a firm grip and was specially developed for use in climbing gyms.





EDELRID



EDELRID - PRODUCTS FOR ROUTE SETTERS

Since its establishment in 1863, EDELRID has developed into a leading manufacturer of ropes, climbing equipment, and personal protective equipment (PPE). The company is particularly characterized by outstanding innovation and sustainability. EDELRID not only developed the first kernmantle rope but also the first bluesign®-certified ropes on the market. All product development activities take place in the German town of Isny im Allgäu. This guarantees not only the exceptional quality and functionality appreciated by EDELRID customers worldwide, but also ongoing innovation.

AIR LOUNGE

Work positioning seat with edge protection for enhanced comfort when working at height for longer periods.



PROSTEP

Length-adjustable, webbing foot loop ascender for effective and low-fatigue rope climbs. The PROSTEP is infinitely adjustable thanks to the integrated Slide Block buckle. The widened foot loop makes standing and climbing far more comfortable and can even be secured to the foot.



TOOL SAFETY LEASH

Elasticated strap for securing tools against falling or dropping. The large girth hitch loop with a Tanka cord lock enables extremely versatile use. The integrated carabiner can be attached to personal protective equipment. Not PPE.



GRIP GLOVE

Sensitivity, grip, abrasion resistance and protection all in one—this is what the GRIP GLOVES offer. The lightweight all-round protective gloves are certified according to EN 388 and are manufactured free of harmful substances according to Standard 100 by OEKO-TEX®.

SPOC

Ultra-light pulley with backstop. Designed for lifting loads, crevasse rescue operations, or as an emergency ascender.



SALATHE

Light and well-ventilated climbing helmet for tree care work. The combination of a foam-injected EPP core and a partial ABS hard shell enables both optimum safety and a minimum weight. Fulfills requirements regarding protection against shocks and impacts in accordance with EN 12492.



FLASK

Small, easily accessible bag for storing small tools and valuables. Large opening with VCR fastener ensures quick access to the contents and can be secured with an additional push button.



VECTOR X

Lightweight modular harness for any kind of work and movement on the rope or in rope systems. Especially comfortable thanks to 3D Vent technology. The intelligently integrated but detachable chest ascender enables efficient climbing in rope systems.

HAND CRUISER

Ergonomically shaped hand ascender for a comfortable ascent on the rope. The curved design increases comfort and reduces friction in the system. A large eyelet allows several carabiners to be attached; a smaller eyelet slightly higher is ideal for setting up a directional anchor.



CASK 28

Robust rope carrier bag with hard-wearing construction for high durability. Rigid design for easy storage of ropes. The CASK 28 has the capacity for approx. 60 m tree climbing rope or 80 m static rope.



AXIOM SLIDER

Carabiner with integrated pulley in the spine. The pulley reduces rope friction to a minimum and the pulley maintains its function even under load. The optimized design of the AXIOM ensures that the rope is always ideally guided so that the rope can always run on the pulley.



SETTER BOX & SETTER BAG

Practical and secure transport aid for route setters that perfectly holds the euro containers commonly used in most climbing gyms for storing holds or two type 2 mail containers. The all-round strap system withstands loads of up to 150 kg and can be suspended at two angles to allow the attachment of two SETTER BAGS.





ALIENS BERGSPORT & ARBEITSSICHERHEIT

„Aliens“ was the name of the camming devices that was the first product in the portfolio of Aliens Bergsport & Arbeitssicherheit e. K.. The family business is located in Upper Bavaria since its registration in 1995. The camming devices are still available on the market. Since that till today ALIENS is a name in the world of sport climbing as well as in the professional world of ropes courses, rescue, work and climb. Distributing several brands like Maxim (Teufelberger), Beta Clipstics, Edelweiss (from Beal Group) or Totem-Cams. There are also products under the label „Aliens“ available. Quick, reliable, good value for money balance.



ALIENS HMS STEEL SCREW

ALIENS HMS steel carabiners fulfill the EN 362 standard for professional climbing and EN 12275 for sport climbing. They are galvanized and available either in silver or black color. Handling and "touch" of the carabiners is very smooth and handy. Long lasting and way less abrasion as on carabiners made from aluminum.



ALIENS ARTWALL STEEL

ALIENS INDOOR FIXED STEEL, a snap hook that is used mainly in gyms. Made from steel and stainless steel including a pin for fixing in a certain position, can be removed and assembled by user. These carabiners, made from steel, show less abrasion caused by ropes and also avoid black hands and ropes as it occurs while working with carabiners made from aluminum.



ALIENS EXPRESS INDOOR

Designed for use at climbing gyms, indoor or outdoor, and any other artificial climbing installation. Our Quickdraws meet all requirements of modern climbing equipment. These quickdraws are available in many different lengths of slings. Any part can be replaced, spare parts are available on demand.

www.aliens-outdoor.com



SINGING ROCK is one of the world leaders on the market of climbing equipment and professional protective equipment for work at heights. All of the high-performance and innovative products are **developed and produced in the Czech republic** and they are certified and fully comply with appropriate EU directives and standards and requirements of US market (CE, NFPA and ANSI). **SINGING ROCK is climbing** and we simply have everything what you need for your climbing and personal protective equipment to prevent falling.



REDBLOCK

Stainless steel anchor device, that extends the lifetime of the rope when toppling.

- » ideal partner for adventure parks, rope courses and climbing gyms
- » allows to be installed in two axes
- » for use with static and dynamic ropes
- » unique production number for better traceability and inspection

Weight: 375 g (13.23 oz)

Material: side plates - light alloy, sheave - stainless steel

Strength: 26 kN

Max. diameter of rope: 12 mm



RAMA

Intuitive belay device with an enhanced braking feature designed for gym or single pitch sport climbing.

- » for 8.7–11 mm single ropes
- » operating is very simple, as it works without any moving parts or lever
- » durable stainless steel braking surface provides longer lifetime and the smooth and secure control for gradual lowering
- » functionality is according to the tube principle and is therefore suitable for lead and top-rope climbing

www.singingrock.com



TOP RENTAL

Padded sit harness suitable mainly for rentals in climbing gyms or rope courses.

- » non-openable buckles for easier dressing the harness
- » one gear loop with a load capacity 10 kN increases the safety in case of incorrect tying in
- » reinforced tie-in loop for longer lifetime of the harness
- » color distinguished tie-in loop (white = size XS-M, red = size L-XXL) for quick orientation when choosing a size

Size: XS-M; L-XXL

Weight: 395 g (13.93 oz) [XS-M]



TOOLKIT

Special bag to carry fasteners and tools for route setting.

- » intended to be attached to the harness via carabiners or directly to the user using an additional belt
- » a number of holders and closable pockets for tools and fasteners
- » side slots for a utility knife, a screwdriver, pencils etc.

Weight: 650 g (23 oz)

Size: main compartment ca. 23 x 20 x 8 cm (+ outside slots and pockets)

Material: Polymar

Max. load: 10 kg (22 lb)



FRANKLIN

Work positioning seat providing more comfort when hanging in the harness.

- » easy to adjust with Rock&Lock buckles
- » wide sitting area ensures good stability and allows comfortable hanging
- » suspension straps do not press on your thighs
- » three D-rings (bearing capacity of 50 kg) for the gear attachment

Weight: 1650 g (58.2 oz)

Max. load: 250 kg (551 lb)



TECHNIC STANDARD

Fully adjustable work positioning and fall arrest harness with easy-lock buckles.

- » steel positioning points according to EN 358
- » easy-lock buckles enable fluent adjustment
- » 2 braided gear loops with a bearing capacity of 10 kg
- » slots designed for a secure hanging of heavy equipment
- » chest and dorsal attachment point according to EN 361

Weight: 1620 g [size M/L] (57.14 oz)

CE: CE 1019 • EN 358 • EN 361 • EN 813



A family owned business with the tradition of 5 generations, that is KONG Italy. Founded in 1830 at Lake Como in northern Italy it still has its home and base there. Finest Hardware for climbers made in Europe guarantees for short distance transport. But KONG Italy is also well known for its famous inventions like the „KeyLock“ system avoiding a snag on a carabiner lock. Also the patented FROG carabiner, a very unique carabiner with a self locking mechanism, is a product invented by KONG or the well known Slyde plate for the fully adjustable self belay an an anchor point. A lot of experience in metal, that's KONG Italy.



INDOOR SCREW SLEVE

High tensile strength AISI 316 stainless steel carabiner with screw gate.

The particular D shape prevents the rotation of the hook and allows distribution of most of the load along the stronger axis.

Equipped with screw gate which makes it perfect for all professional applications.

High quality product completely developed and produced in Italy.

Tested piece by piece.

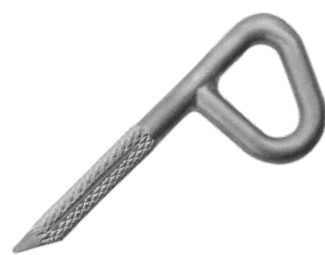


ANCHOR KIT

Anchoring device made of AISI 316 stainless steel. It is composed of an expansion plug and a plate. Suitable to be used in indoor and outdoor environments that are not aggressive enough to cause stress corrosion cracking (SCC).

Versions with expansion plugs M10x70mm and M12x90mm.

Tested EN 959:2018 Class 2 and UIAA.



INFIX

Piton to be resined used to create anchor points on the rock.

High quality, made of sturdy stainless steel weather resistant.



SPEAGLE

Innovative compact stainless steel hammer with lightweight head, specifically designed for mountaineering, caving and rescue. Equipped with two hexagonal keys to tighten the screws, one of 13mm in the handle and one of 17mm shaped in the hammer head. Fitted with an ergonomic rubber handle and 10mm tape for a safe handling.

Awarded at Industry Award in 2009.

The compact size makes it perfect for equipping works in caving situations.



DRILLER

Special adapter that allows you to turn Pianta Spit perforator into a drill with SDS tips. Allows drilling of holes of various diameters and depths, for all types of anchoring, avoiding the use of electric drills.

Supplied with Allen key size 4 for mounting and dismanting and two SDS tips, measures 8x100 and 10x110.

www.kongitaly.de



Tendon promotes active mountaineering which is not only a sport, philosophy or life

style, but in addition represents the unrestrained forces of nature that stream across all senses of anyone who wants to know oneself through mountain climbing. TENDON climbing ropes are intended both for adrenaline lovers who prefer rock climbing and most often use our single ropes, as well as for fans of artificial walls who prefer ropes of wider



MASTER PRO 9.2

This rope defeats the stigma that thin ropes are not durable. You don't need to carry one rope for practicing and another one for red-point. Innovated, extremely fine SBS sheath significantly prolongs its lifespan. The rope is at the same time soft enough and easy to work with. If you're looking for a devoted friend for sport climbing, this is your choice.



HATTRICK 10.2

A rope with SECURE technology that offers less UIAA falls but has much larger sheath that ensures durability and a long lifespan of the rope. Perfect choice for rentals and permanent use in the climbing gyms (top-ropeing).



ROPE CLEANER ECO

Highly effective concentrated enzymatic liquid detergent for safe and thorough washing of ropes, suitable for washing in an automatic washing machine and for hand washing. It does not damage the ropes in any way and after thorough drying, the rope is clean, ages more slowly and is easy to use.

ROPE MARKER

A simple and useful means for rope marking – both centres and several metres from the rope ends. Marking with the Rope Marker makes rope handling easier and increases safety. The chemical composition does not affect the structure and properties of the rope and guarantees a long durability of marking.

www.mytendon.com



MASTER PRO 9.7

Is rope with outstanding durability. This incredible resilience is down to the unique braid SBS construction, which guarantees superior resistance to wear, greatly increasing the lifespan of the rope. It is the perfect choice for those who prefer durability and longevity over weight, including high performance climbers who are training for their projects.



HATTRICK 9.7

If you prefer small diameters but you don't want to underestimate the safety, there is no better option than Hattrick 9.7. SBS construction of the sheath together with a SECURE technology make this rope safe, long-lasting and prevents the sheath from shifting.



INDOOR 10.2i

A rope with braided core developed especially for top-rope climbing at gyms. Suitable for climbing schools and rentals.



BOREAL



Climber: Bryon Casas Toranzo Realclub de escalada Berlin
Photo: Leonardo Méndez Lenk

BOREAL JUST4RENT - THE ULTIMATE RENTAL SHOE

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



Climber: Marie-Luise Kühne in Magic Mountain Berlin
Photo: Pablo Quevedo

www.borealoutdoor.com



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 8mm 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.



Photo: Noe Berger training session



GESHIDO

The Geshido and Geshido Lace were designed for the climber that needs to excel on all types of terrain from moderately overhanging, to vertical, to off-vertical faces for long periods of time. The Geshido is built with a single layer vegan synthetic upper, a synthetic upper will undergo less stretch than a leather upper, which will, in turn, keep the shoe feeling tighter and more powerful. The Geshido has a 2 strap hook and loop closure system for easy on and off. The Geshido Lace has a single layer leather upper paired with the 3/4 length lace closure system will allow the shoe to mold to your foot over time giving you that perfect custom fit and then allow you to cinch the shoe up when you need some extra power at the toes. The entire Geshido collection is equipped with a 1.6 full-length plastic midsole that will ensure that you have enough power to drive through small features and provide confidence during those technical sequences. Also, all models have a thinner heel rand to yield when the route goes past vertical but is paired with a dark spine heel midsole to ensure that there is plenty of rigidity and power to the toes when needed.



GESHIDO LACE MEN'S



GESHIDO LACE WOMEN'S



GESHIDO MEN'S



GESHIDO WOMEN'S

DRAW YOUR OWN LINES

It's About Progression. Seventeen years ago, Evolv began as a vision for climbing's progressive future. In the years since, our small crew of southern Californian climbers built Evolv into a creative force. We've collaborated with our generation's best climbers, made shoes that climbed the world's hardest problems, and gone head-to-head with the outdoor industry's biggest companies—always with a scrappy and inventive approach to getting shit done. A lot has changed since we started out. Climbing gyms have reshaped the sport and culture of

climbing. We're meeting a new kind of climber at the gym, one who defies the traditional ideas of heritage climbing brands. And Evolv itself has grown, with new partnerships that allow us to amplify what we do to a global audience. Today, with the same progressive attitude that got us here, we're beginning a new chapter at Evolv. We're bringing renewed focus to the creativity and personal expression that define modern climbers. Through our climbing projects, we're going to create the future of climbing. Let's go.

SUPERLIGHT CHALKBAGS





POLYTALON

POLYTALON – CLIMGING HOLDS MADE IN GERMANY

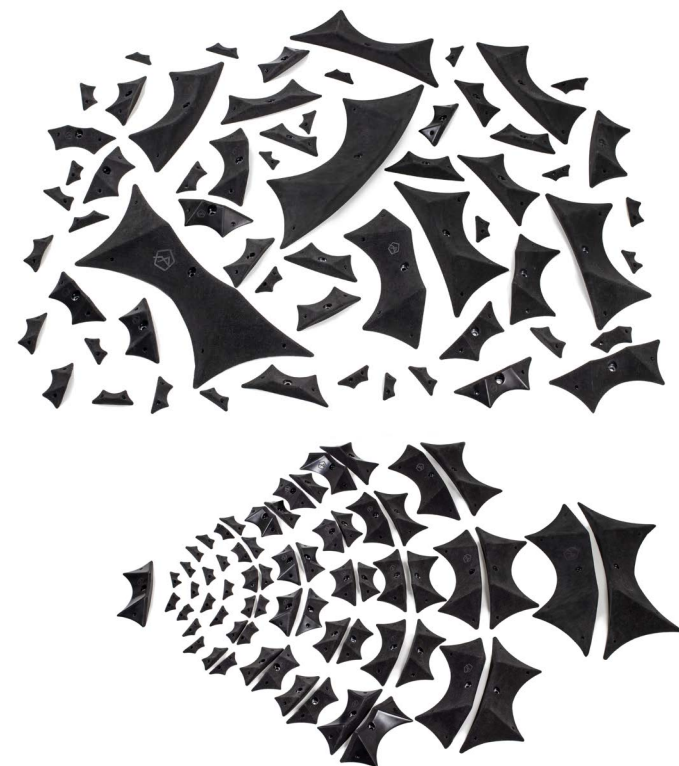
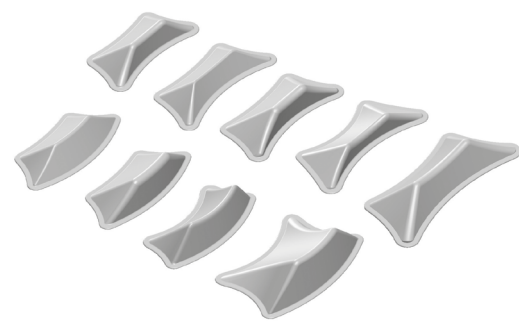


POLYTALON provides the perfect fusion of creativity, engineering, reliability and a pinch of madness. If you are looking for modular and ergonomic shapes with a special haptic, we are happy to assist you to fulfil your vision of a diverse climbing and setting experience. Our PU sets are carefully selected and manufactured inhouse, with focusing on each and every demand. Functionality, durability and sustainability first. Our shapes are mostly directional, symmetrical, blockable and clean, with an aesthetic outline for outstanding, still space-saving designs. You can literally feel the longlasting wicked grip of our unique surface structure which is also easy to clean. These shapes are ready to help you easily create special climbs, from easy to comp, from boulder to lead.

For more information, feel free to contact us: info@polytalon.com
And stay tuned on our social media channels: [@polytalon_climbing](https://www.instagram.com/polytalon_climbing)

BATS MACRO SERIES

Brand new BATS volumes. The bigger and even more impressive version of the popular “little” friends. This set is spectacular for beginners as well as for professionals and offers technique, friction, dynamic and fun setting and climbing. The set also comes in dualtex.

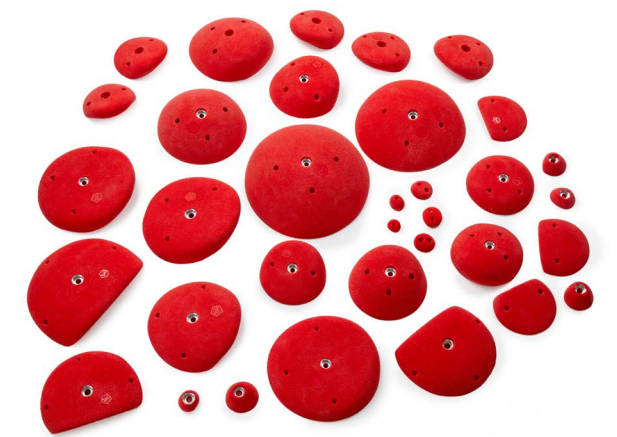


BATS SERIES

The innovative and eye-catching shape of the BATS is extending routesetting to a new level. Different sizes, angles and incuts as well as countless possible combinations and adjustments help you to create very special movements, grip combinations and routes.

FULLMOON SERIES

Fullmoon is rising. The name says it all. Excitingly round and clean shapes with ergonomic and pleasant slopers. Some comfy but flat jugs and hard crimps. An ornament for every wall.



SAHARA SERIES

The brand new SAHARA series is characterized by symmetrical and directional shapes with flat edges. The holds can be combined into complex showcase formations and blocked in many different ways to adjust difficulty and add variety to your setting styles. Jugs, Crimps, Edges – Rough and Wavy.

MOON SERIES

From two-hand jugs to finger-killing crimps and nerve-wrecking slopers: The MOON series has it all. This set goes in almost any angle and any difficulty. A real ergonomic and universal allrounder.



GEO SERIES

Consistent, geometrical set with straight lines. A mix of flat and rather small holds close to the material limits. With this series, you can insert a small size hard route anywhere. Still keeping the walls clean and tidy but extending route versatility and quantity.

TRAININGS EQUIPMENT

The POLYBOARD is a multifunctional hangboard. In addition to the essential finger pockets it comes with specially designed holds, providing countless setup and training possibilities for every skill. Outstandingly special are the eyebolts, where individual training tools can be attached easily. A proper power tool for fingerstrength and full-body workout.





DIMPLE – JUGS

What's better than a good handful? We've got them. Dimple family holds are simple, easy and ergonomic jugs. Available in both polyurethane (PU) and polyester (PE).



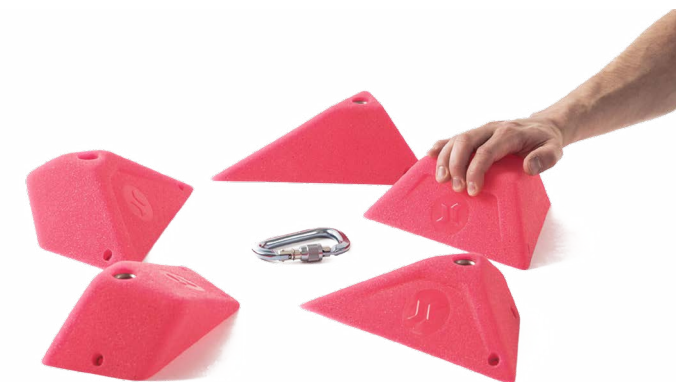
FACETS – HARD SLOPERS

The hardest holds of the Kitka so far. Facets family holds are difficult slopers and are designed for serious climbing. Whole family includes 72 holds. Available in PU.



SPACE – FUTURISTIC FUN

Versatile holds, which can be used on overhangs or slabs. Holds have geometric shapes with the small crimp grooves. Whole family includes 52 holds. Available in PU.



HALF DOME – ICONIC HOLDS

Name and idea for the holds came obviously from Yosemite National Park's famous granite formation. Sets are named after different climbing routes of Half Dome. Holds are shaped to be ergonomic and meant for fun climbing. Include 38 holds and are available in PU.



KITKA - SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN

Kitka is a climbing holds company based in northern Finland. Around here we've got reindeers, northern lights, and very long & dark winters. It's a perfect environment for indoor climbing.

Kitka holds are shaped with minimalistic and functional Scandinavian design, with a special focus on ergonomics. Everything we put onto a hold is there to be grabbed. Add a little bit of chalk, and you're good to go.

sales@kitkaclimbing.com

SLICKS – DUAL TEXTURE PERFECTION

Big holds with great looking matt dual texture! Slicks family holds are medium difficulty holds that allow setting medium grade boulders on moderate angle walls. Difficult on steeper walls. All the holds, even the largest ones, are quite low profile so they work well on slabs as well. Available in PU





Vertical Endeavors - Glendale Heights, Illinois

SQUADRON

Take flight with this set of multipurpose Diff-Tex™ geometrical features. Twist and rotate to discover multiple grips, varying difficulty levels and playful solutions to your new route.



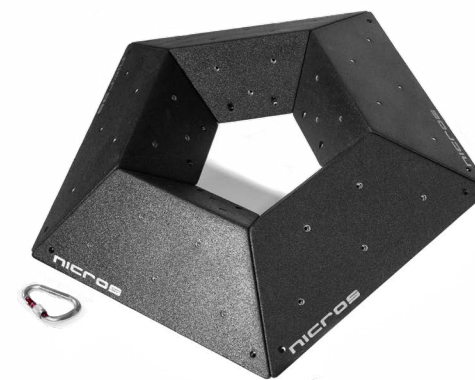
NANDYS

This set of five contrast their smooth center with grippy surfaces for pinching. These can be turned and rotated to create classic lines or force challenging moves. fantastic addition to any setting team's arsenal.



PENTABLOC

Offering a wide variety, from fundamental shapes to custom builds, these wood volumes can be used individually, but are designed to be blocked and stacked together. Complete with anti-marking material, this line of wood volumes will keep any gym looking fresh. Wood volumes are now available in multiple colors and assemblies.



MONDOS

Made with premium quality materials that climbers love, details setters want, and durability owners expect, Mondo volumes are a classic way to extend or alter the geometric shape of your wall for more setting options. Designed with sleek and simple edges, these wood volumes are suitable for all skill levels and provide ergonomic solutions for both horizontal and vertical terrain.



Twin Cities Bouldering - St. Paul, Minnesota

ENGAGE FOR SAFETY™

Equipped with the knowledge and extensive background in design, engineering, construction and operations of climbing walls, the Nicros team developed a NEW program: Engage For Safety™. This all-inclusive program offers wall inspections, route setter training programs, Auto Belay Safety Systems™ and more. So, when it's time to refresh and re-energize your walls, Nicros has you covered.

NICROS

Nicros is best known for their inspirational climbing walls, legendary training products, legendary state of the art safety systems, hand-holds, and modular wood volumes. Since 1992, the Nicros team has combined their passion for climbing, and technical engineering know-how to create dynamic climbing environments around the world. Constantly seeking to innovate, Nicros has shifted their focus to the puzzle-masters themselves, the route setters. By re-energizing classic shapes, and introducing new holds, we emphasize bold geometric shapes, versatility, and light weight material to equip and inspire route setters everywhere.

PROP

A four-foot pinch feature offers amazing Diff-Tex™ grabs for climbers of all abilities and designed to be used as a multidirectional hold. Your imagination can envision how to set this hold to enhance any route. For a more intense, pumped forearm work out, put this feature on a steep overhang.



MOON BITES

Small, but skillful, the Moon Bites surface is mostly Zero-Tex™, with a limited gripped incut. This will force fingertip contact strength, making these bites truly unique as crimps or underclings.



GEO LEDGES FULL SERIES

This complete series of Geo Ledges 1, 2 & 3 offer a range of classic, low profile crimp rails to delicate holds that demand precise footwork. In the hand of a skilled route setter, these Diff-Tex™ ledges can be rotated and turned for a variety of setting options.

Unique Shapes



www.artline-holds.com

ArtLine story is closely linked to Brice Anziutti's career. He created ArtLine in 2011, with the pioneering idea of breaking with the conventional codes that were originally inspired by outdoor climbing. Rather than imitating rock, the hold's design should inspire people to want to climb. ArtLine gradually emerged as a leading brand and initiated a transition in the sport, with a clear break between indoor and outdoor climbing.

TRIBELINE JUGS

We got the idea for Tribeline Jugs because we observed that route setting for beginners is **too often neglected** by climbing halls, who focus instead on the higher levels of difficulty. And yet these novices represent the majority of a new wave of **urban enthusiasts** that the halls are looking to **convert and retain**. As a climbing holds manufacturer, we thought ArtLine had a role to play, creating holds that would make **climbing easy without leaving out the technical and fun aspects**.



Different types of grip, with technical subtleties (closed vs open sided, flat jugs, positive jugs) help develop the gestural range



Comfortable holds that fit the shape of the hand, that aren't painful or scary!

Train at home



HOME WALL

Training at home has never been so popular with wider use of training apparatus and private walls. At ArtLine we have our ear to the ground when it comes to new trends, so we decided to **create the Homewall**. Thanks to its **free-standing structure and adjustable angle**, no need for a load-bearing wall. You can **set it up anywhere**: in the house, the apartment, the garage or even the office. No need to be a DIY expert either, it's **as easy to put together as Swedish flatpack furniture**. With family or friends, whether you want to **play or train hard, now you can climb at home!**

The Homewall is made from certified **eco-label (FSC) hardwood plywood**. The **reinforced frame** keeps the entire structure stable, ensuring maximum safety.

Difficulty can be adjusted by **increasing the angle** (between 15 and 30°). **The maximum height (2.45 m)** fits to the standard ceiling height (2.5m) in apartments and houses.



Play at home

THE SLICES

Slices follow on from our Slopes, created in 2020 by Mike Fuselier as part of the ArtLab. Available in **several angles (10°, 20°, 25°, 30°, 40°)** Slopes allow you to adjust the incline of a structure. But Slopes have also proven to be very **effective on slabs**. They test the climbers' ability to grip with their feet. They've featured more and in **World Cups** - the setters have really adopted the range, so we're delighted!



Slices have a more elongated shape than Slopes. They still have **straight sides**, so they can marry the edges of structures perfectly. Their principle advantage is their flat surface, on to which **micro holds or other Slices can be screwed**, altering the grip.





SANDSTONE PINCHES XL B

SANDSTONE PINCHES LG

SANDSTONE PINCHES SM



SANDSTONE HANDLES 3XL

SANDSTONE HANDLES 2XL

SANDSTONE HANDLES XL

ROCK CANDY HOLDS



Born out of a love for climbing in 2006, Rock Candy remains a trusted industry partner for gyms, route setters and climbers around the globe. Every shape released is meant to provide setters and climbers with a unique opportunity to create movement and have fun.

Each hold is created with a texture that provides enough grit to withstand typical gym traffic for years while being easy on the hands. Excellent hold quality and customer service are the reasons Rock Candy Holds is continually recognized by the climbing industry as a company providing some of the best products in the scene.

Find new inspiration and the full product line at rockcandyholds.com.

SANDSTONE

The Sandstone series combines smooth textures with grooved striation for an eye-catching aesthetic that feels great. Shaped by Chris Neal, this expanding series of pinches, edges, handles and huecos might make you forget you're pulling on plastic.

Sandstone pinches are no-nonsense holds that can work well on nearly any route. Their slightly bowed shape lets you give them a flip for variation in difficulty.

Sandstone Handles are closed off jugs that can give climbers a secure grip on any angle, making them great for roof climbs or beginner-friendly routes. Variations in grip radius and slope give each move a unique feel.



SANDSTONE HUECO FEATURE



SANDSTONE HANDLE FEATURE

BLOCKUS — DUAL TEXTURE

The varying angles, depths and widths of the Blockus series have made it a staple pinch in gyms around the world. New dual texture variants add a fresh take on these classic holds so you can switch things up for the send.



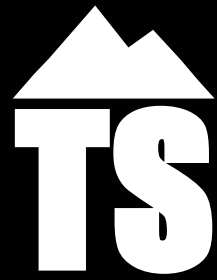
BLOCKUS DOTS 2XL B
Dual Texture



BLOCKUS MD B
Dual Texture



BLOCKUS XL C
Dual Texture



THRILL SEEKER HOLDS

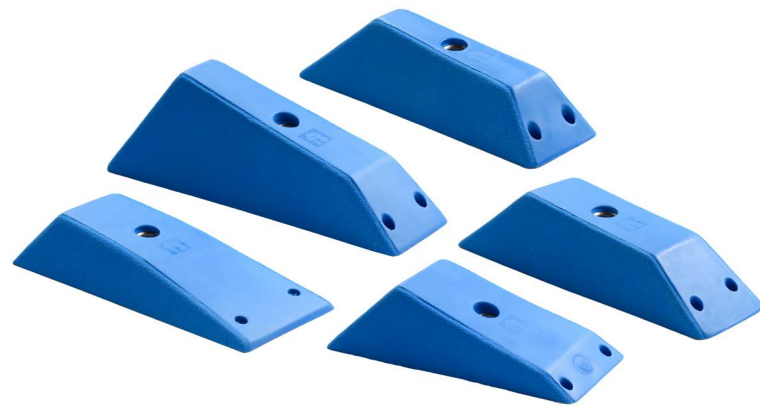
FEEL THE THRILL

www.thrillseekerholds.com

Our mission is to create holds for every climbing gym, every bouldering gym and every climber. From easyjugs to tricky competition holds - we have it all.

Our latest range of holds is called **TITANS**. For the time being TITANS include 28 big, matt finish dual texture holds with appealing geometric design. These holds are shaped by Dario Stefanou, who is well known for his dual texture masterpieces.

The thrilling design of our holds is backed up by the industry leading manufacturer - Composite X. Thrill Seeker Holds are produced in Bulgaria with the best material available on the market Dannomond. Dannomond is lighter, stronger and better compared to any other polyurethane used for the production of artificial climbing holds. Our colors match the industry standards.



TITANS Pinches size L



TITANS Pinches size Mega



TITANS Sloper size Mega

TITANS Edges/Sloper size XL/Mega

Most of the TITANS holds feature a tricky inbuilt foothold. This almost unnoticeable feature offers a notable functionality for commercial and competition routesetting.

inbuilt foothold



Our **Obsidian** line is getting bigger! In the fall of 2021 we will expand the range by adding 10 fiberglass macros. The usual geometric touch and matt finish dual texture will be in place. Stay tuned!



OBSIDIAN Pinches Positive size L



OBSIDIAN Pinches Hard size L



OBSIDIAN Slopers size XL



OBSIDIAN Footholds size XS



UNLEASHED CLIMBING

INSPIRED BY MOVEMENT

www.unleashedclimbing.com

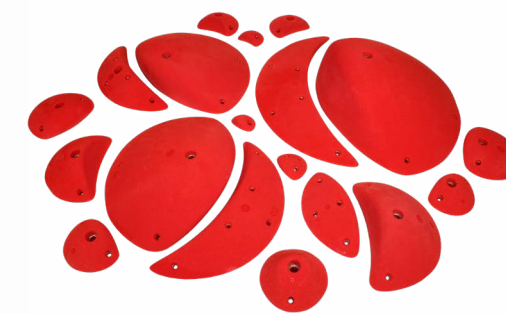
Unleashed Climbing is Australia's most productive and successful climbing hold brand. Since its beginning in 2017, Unleashed has outgrown its small time, meagre beginnings to now providing holds worldwide through its network of distributors. Unleashed holds can be shipped straight from Composite-X and Walltopia, direct to your location.

Our philosophy is to grow large families of holds - to continually evolve them and add to them. Our passion is to create holds that blend aesthetically pleasing shapes with functional design, so that setters can create movements that are pleasant and memorable.

Will Watkins is the heart and soul of Unleashed and uses his 20+ years of shaping experience to bring to you his vision for creating fun and diverse climbs.

LOAVES

The Loaves offer you a simple and pleasing shape that is directional yet diverse. Within the 143 shapes, there are a vast number of blocking combinations to create completely different holds and combinations. All have the ability to be screwed on, allowing the setter to make use of the edges of walls and volumes as much as possible - perfect for competition setting where forcing movement and fine tuning is required.



ECLIPSE

The Eclipse range brings to you a family of holds that have the ability to be set in many ways, allowing the setter to create precise movements and grades with its series of blockers. This versatility makes them a perfect choice for any commercial setting crew. Each of the 30

numbered main holds has 2 specific blockers that are native to it. The combinations don't stop there, as many of the blockers can be used on all the other holds too. With the inclusion of a range of Eclipse Jugs (not pictured) this family totals 159 holds.



DRIFTS

The Drifts are one of the largest families Unleashed has on offer. From the beginning, it started out as a basic 'sandstone' feature and has now evolved into a full blown 'sandstone' line. The Drifts compliment the simple vision of the Eclipse and Loaves and give a more natural look and feel whilst remaining comfortable and user friendly. From small technical feet to large feature holds, the Drifts are easy to use and fun to play with.

MACROS

Unleashed Macros are produced at Walltopia and offer 17 simple and easy to use shapes. The texture is fine, yet offers a great balance of friction. They all have easy and comfortable grabs and offer the ability to push up against edges of walls and be set on the extremities of volumes. All have a nice gentle taper with no flange so they blend in smoothly with the walls that they are set on.





GRIZZLY HOLDS



Our vision is to inspire routesetters through high-quality climbing holds poured from Aragon's industry leading polyurethane. Our shapes were designed with a focus on ergonomics, creativity, compatibility, and aesthetics. We want to provide routesetters with the tools to leave

climbers with a memorable and positive climbing experience in the gym. Our mission is to produce timeless shapes that inspire routesetters to think outside of the box and push routesetting into the future.



FLAKES

41 beautifully shaped Flake jugs. Sizes from Feet to XL can be both bolt on and screw on mounted for maximum versatility. A natural aesthetic with a modern comfortable feel, these jugs are tons of fun to set with! Shaped by: Joey Janssen

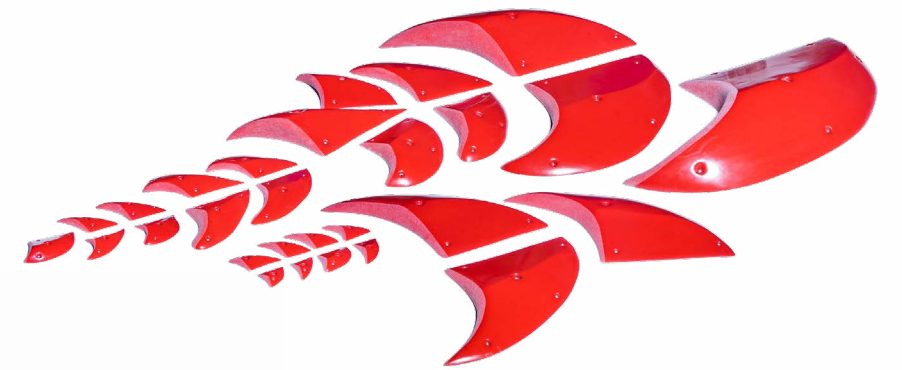
TECTONIC PLATES

35 holds in this complete set. Force movement and precision with these paired blocking geometric edges ranging from incut to slopey. Place them wherever you like as all shapes come with a both bolt on and screw on option.



FANGS

28 beautiful dual-tex edges that run slick all the way into the bolt holes. Ranging from slightly slopey to slightly incut, this set has both bolt-on and screw-on capabilities to make setting aesthetically functional boulders a breeze. Have fun!



GLACIERS

40 clean jugs make up this entire set. These have been designed and shaped with feel and ergonomics in mind to give new climbers a pleasant first experience. However, these will make even your strongest climbers work for it whether it is on long steep routes or powerful roof boulder problems.



FLOODS

34 pinches ready to fill your forearms with pump. With this set you will be able to put any climbers power endurance to the test. Each size includes holds with a variety of to ensure consistency when setting routes or boulder problems with lots of wall angle changes.

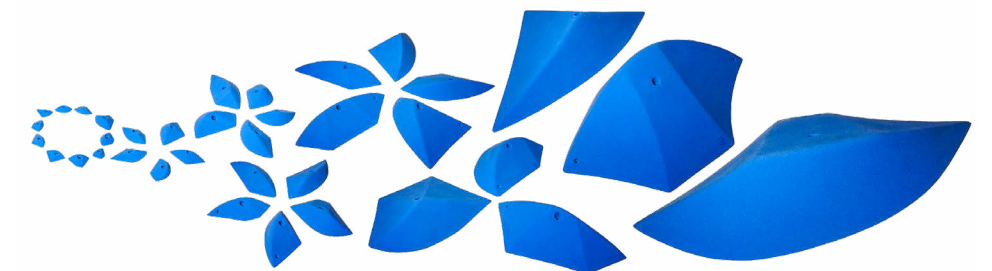


SINKHOLES

28 huecos that will leave your members wanting more. These huecos range from incut to slopey to give you the perfect hold combinations for a variety of angle changes. Shaped with our finer texture to ensure climbing on these is always a good time.

RIDGELINES

36 gorgeously sculpted slopers that will demand tension and strength from any climber. These will quickly become your feel-good favorite sloper to set with as you discover all of their subtleties.



MICROBES

33 dual tex screw ons. Precise hand and footholds for your next competition or technical boulder problem. They work great for directional placement and are perfect for that small jib needed to force any move.



Illusion brand products consist of polyester resin and recently we added new wood products under the name **Illusion wood**. The name of these eyecatchers itself testifies to their main features.

Most of the macros are available in **Dual Texture** version, and together with Illusion wood volumes they are perfect for route setting and creating unique climbing routes.

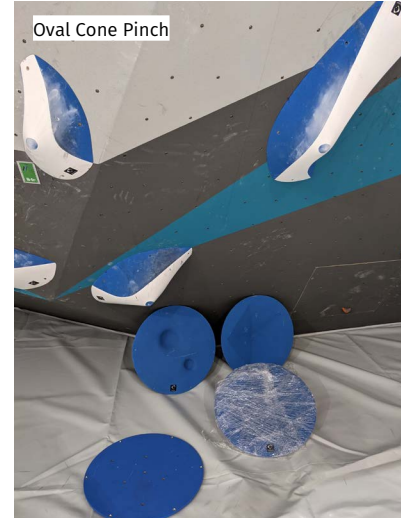
They were designed **to give style, creativity, and movement** to your route setting.

The **Illusion brand** is primarily designed for competition climbing.

WHEN WOOD MEETS THE FIBERGLASS

This year, **Illusion** is presenting something **unique** and **innovative**. Our team of experts for fiberglass and wood have created a **one-of-a-kind combination** of **wood** and **fiberglass** materials. For an even more creative, diverse, and attractive climbing wall route setting you can now choose to have a **wooden volume** with a **fiberglass or wood insert**. We designed ten different models of inserts and along with the volumes they present the **perfect combination** if you are looking for even more **challenging climbing techniques**.

With lots of different combinations that can be set in multiple directions, this **wooden-fiberglass range** is the perfect combo to level up your setting game!



CLIMBING GYM HEAVEN

www.climbinggymheaven.com

Climbing Gym Heaven is a platform dedicated to all climbers, gym owners, gym managers, route setters and investors. We provide a wide range of products and services by building climbing walls for your climbing gyms, providing flooring solutions, carpenter products and specific training elements.

At Climbing Gym Heaven, you will find a large variety of some of the best brands of **climbing holds, macros, volumes, training equipment, and other climbing accessories**. Brands as **Illusion, Infinity** and **Climb1** are the top ones when you want unique and different climbing holds, macros, and volumes. And if you need a safety matting the **Citymat** brand is the answer for you. With the knowledge and professionalism of our team we can turn your climbing gym into heaven.

We will provide you with **everything you will ever need** for making your projects a dream come true by equipping your gym with **high-quality equipment** or by simply refreshing your climbing walls.

Contact us at info@climbinggymheaven.com.

DO YOU NEED A PRODUCER?

Woodplastix is a brand that offers OEM production of climbing wall elements, playground equipment, climbing volumes and climbing pyramids. For more information contact us at info@woodplastix.com.



WOOD PLASTIX



ILLUSION WOOD



WINGS 40°



WINGS 50°



WINGS 60°



L PINCHE 1 R



L PINCHE 2 R



WINGS 70°



WINGS 80°



WINGS 90°



L PINCHE 3 R



L PINCHE 4 R



BROTHER METRIX ORANGE



BROTHER MONSTER EGG



CHA BALL XL



MONSTER CHA BALL



DIGITAL CLIMBING HOLDS – THE FRENCH FORM FOR MOVEMENT



Who could have imagined two years ago the roller coaster of emotions that was ahead of us all?

Digital was no exception, but like many brands in the climbing business, we continued to focus on the future, create and invest. Like most people, we strived to stay positive and although many sporting events revealed salvatory for our global moral, there is no doubt that the Tokyo games sealed a deep pride to be part of the climbing sports community.

So, the good news remains, indoor climbing has made its imprint.

For all you routesetter magazine fans that read the last 174-page edition, you will remember of course page 110 where we explained our company's strategy and our determination to sustain and build on creativity and partnerships.

We have achieved many goals and of course, made some more changes (as we must live up to our modern name).

- » We have completed our production transformation to Fiberglass and a new PU that has an excellent grip.
- » Most of our lines run from tiny xs to giant size Monsters.
- » We have maintained our quality vs cost policy
- » We have created a new stellar athletic team to follow up on the outstanding Mawem Brothers
- » We have sustained our two IFSC labels and are lucky to participate in two World Cup Events: Briançon and Moscow.
- » And of course, our partnerships continue to grow. You can now climb on our sparkly Digital holds and Volumes in the UK and Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Italy, Greece, India, Japan and of course France.

Best sellers? The Cha ball dual collection, The very unusual Brother Eggs and of course, the lovely but terrible Brother Flowers.

Frederic Nigoul : Fred@lesartsdelagrimpe.com
 Roisin Boileau Nigoul : Gestion@lesartsdelagrimpe.com

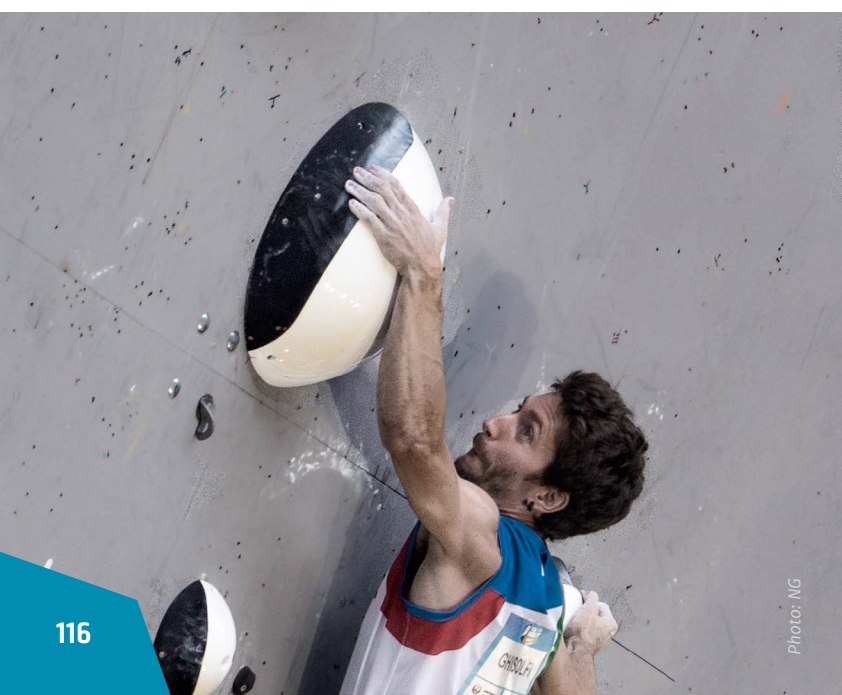


Photo: NG

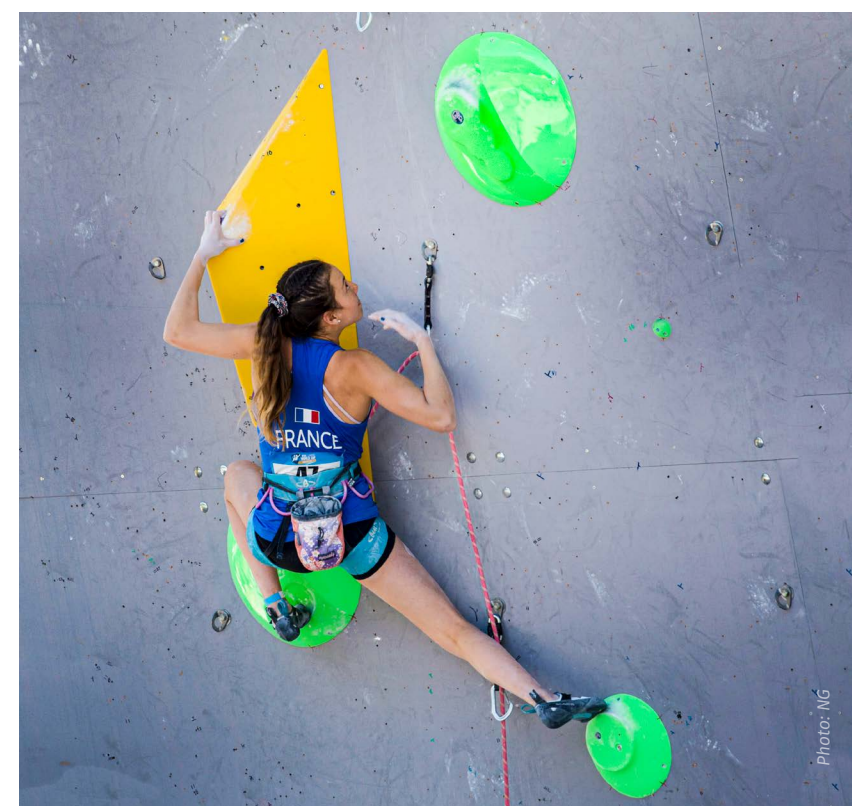


Photo: NG

BROTHER MONSTER POWER





www.settercloset.com

KILTER BOARD

Available in Original and Home Layout. Unique light up adjustable board system with thousands of boulder problems. Designed for everyone!

KILTER X LEMUR

16'x16' 30°-75° degree adjustable bouldering wall with 45° overhanging kickboard. Accommodates sprayboard, available with or without lights.



KILTER by Ian Powell and **Haptic** by our pro setters/shapers design team. Over **4840** grips available in PU from Aragon and Composite-X and in fiberglass from Walltopia.



SANDSTONE

Raised tufa ribs spark joy in all sizes. Brushed and Font slopers work great on volumes. **1245** Sandstone and Sandstone Complex by Ian Powell.



DUAL-TEX SANDSTONE // GRANITE

New dual-tex Sandstone and Granite have been an instant hit in comps. Edges tapered and polished for precision, grips shaped for comfort. By Ian Powell.



SOUTHERN SLOPERS

New Southern Sandstone Kaiju Brushed Ledges join the awesome Southern Slopers series. **102** grips and counting by Jimmy Webb.



HO DUNES

From the shaper of the Lo Riders come the new Ho Dunes! **78** grips and counting by Jeremy Ho.



GRANITE // GRANITE COMPLEX

Complex shapes with blockers designed to fit together in any combination setters can think of to dial in grip type and difficulty. Perfect for reusing the same problem at comps-just block to make it harder! Also check out our new Granite Slopers. **679** grips by Ian Powell.

URBAN PLASTIX

Popular series expanded with new Stratos wavy seam slopers and jugs, new Stealth Dual-Tex slopers and edges, and new Speed Bumps raised rails, crimps, and pinches. **1679** grips from Peter Juhl.



STEALTH



STRATO



SPEED BUMPS

DOWN CLIMB

Comfortable matchable overcut Downclimb Jug with dual-tex arrow.





VOLUMES BY LEZCATA

www.volumesbylezcata.com

We are a team of volume producers, passionate climbers, routesetters, instructors and climbing club leaders. We have been producing volumes since 2014, when we started with the first prototypes for our climbing club. Expecting volumes we are producing various fitness and balance aids to increase the motoric skills and performance for climbers or just for fun...

Our new products are training wooden axes, which combine strength training, drytool and traditional climbing in cooperation with rainbowwedge

We are making a difference between climbing structures with a larger number of holes for placing holds and steps close to the edges and boulder structures with partial or complete absence of holes for holds.

VOLUMES

Our new products are training wooden axes, which combine strength training, drytool and traditional climbing in cooperation with Rainbow Wedge.



RAINBOW WEDGE BELAY-TRAINING DEVICE

www.rainbowwedge.com

RAINBOW WEDGE TRAD PRO

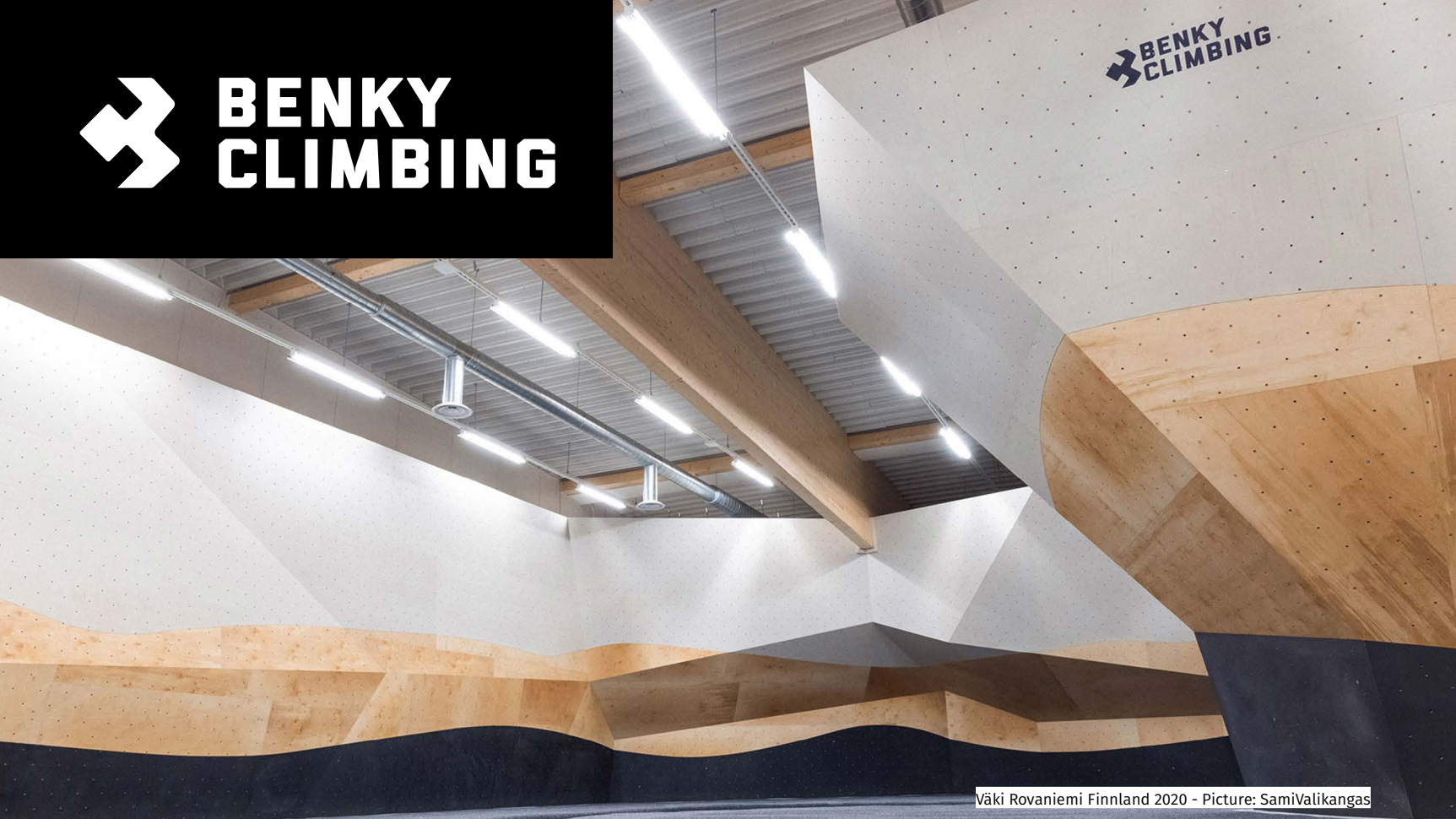
Complete standalone element for climbing walls, made for securing your own self-belay.

The assembly consists of a steel frame in which two opposite duralumin wedges are fitted using two M6 screws, simulating a rock fissure suitable for anchoring belay. Using two sets, it is possible to simulate a belay station or even a bivouac.

Fixed protection can be added to Wedge II, giving this anchor point an additional function. On the path fitted with a system thus completed, both traditional and sport climbing can be combined, including classic "aid climbing". Wall owners will use each point so installed to 200%.

The paths can be used fully for sports climbing only or combined. Whether every other the variant 50/50 for the greater safety of the climber or "extended", so that the bolt catches the climber only in the event of failure of the securing itself.





Väki Rovaniemi Finland 2020 - Picture: SamiValikangas



KBZ Bad Tölz 2020 - Picture: Orgasport Thomas Lindinger

BOULDERGYM DEVELOPMENT, DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

www.benkyclimbing.com



einstein Düsseldorf 2021

benky climbing develops and produces products for the climbing 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 standarts. Climbing holds and volumes of major brands. Gymcare line for the maintenance of climbing holds, walls and rental shoes.

DESIGN & 3-D VISUALIZATION

We've been always passionate climbers. Bouldering all over the world and being active world-cup competitors, we have more than 25 years experience in the climbing industry. We have the knowledge and requirements to design your boulder-gym from the beginning.

CONSTRUCTION AND INSTALLATION

With a professional team of engineers and manufacturer we build your boulder-gym of any complexity according to the actual norm standarts.

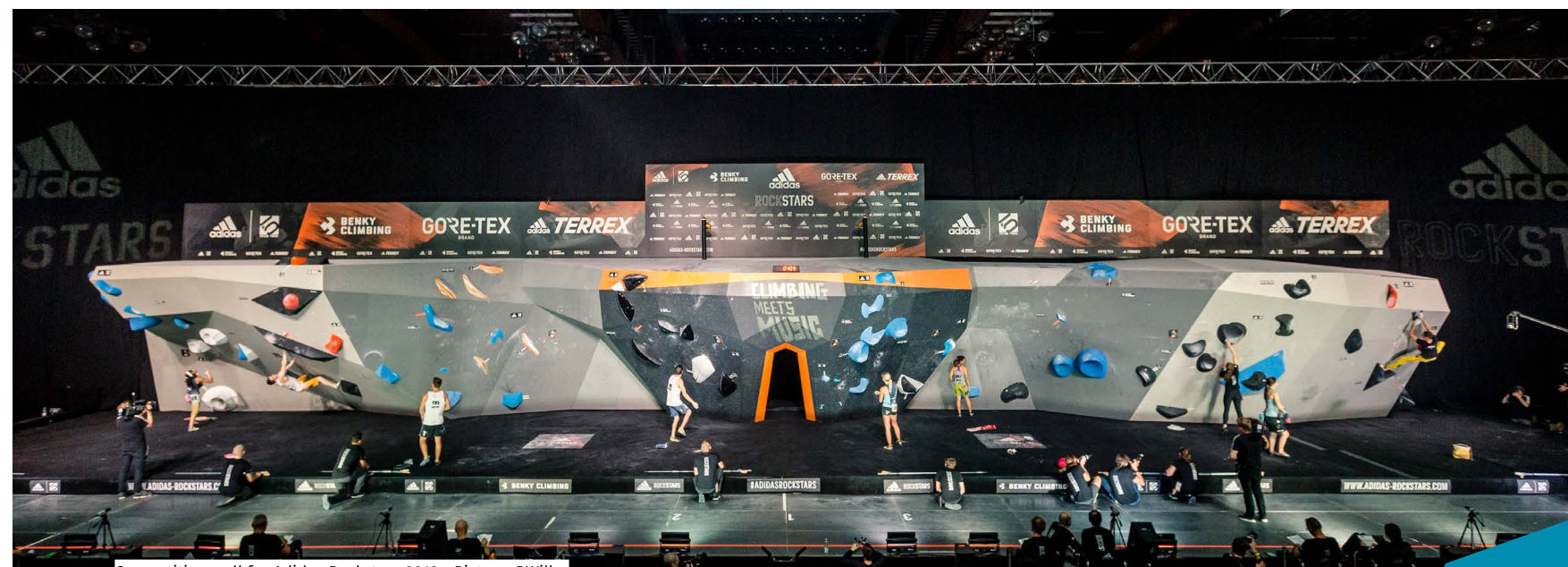
HIGH-END BOULDERMATTING MADE IN GERMANY

The non plus ultra in comfort and safety for boulder-gyms. Q-MAT is a modular and flexible system which will be customised especially for the personal needs of your gym. The sandwich construction guaranties the highest safety standards as well as the carpet surface will provide a less dusty and noise canceling environment.



GYMCARE PRODUCTS

We developed a series of gymcare products. From cleaning holds with our GRIPWASH, keeping your rental shoes fresh with SkunkX and an easy rubber stain removal for clean climbing walls with our latest innovation RUBBERX.



Competition wall for Adidas Rockstars 2019 - Picture: BWiller



TRAINING EQUIPMENT MADE OF WOOD, WE HAVE THEM ALL!
 Training gear made of wood is the most prevalent and essential for regular trainings. Why? Wood is a natural material which is touch-pleasant. Gentle skin care is the most distinguishing feature of wood against other material. Workshop 19/50 is tailor-made training gear and accessories for your climbing gym.



WE MADE IT OUR MISSION TO BRING WELL DESIGNED AND SUSTAINABLE EQUIPMENT TO THE MARKET.



Premium dry climbing chalk with a 100% plastic free packaging line.



Balm that helps to regenerate your skin after an intense sessions.



Skin-grinder to keep the skin even and remove scraps.



Keep the rocks clean... and celebrate your ascent.



100% cotton tape in a neat reusable tinplate jar.



FROM 80's...

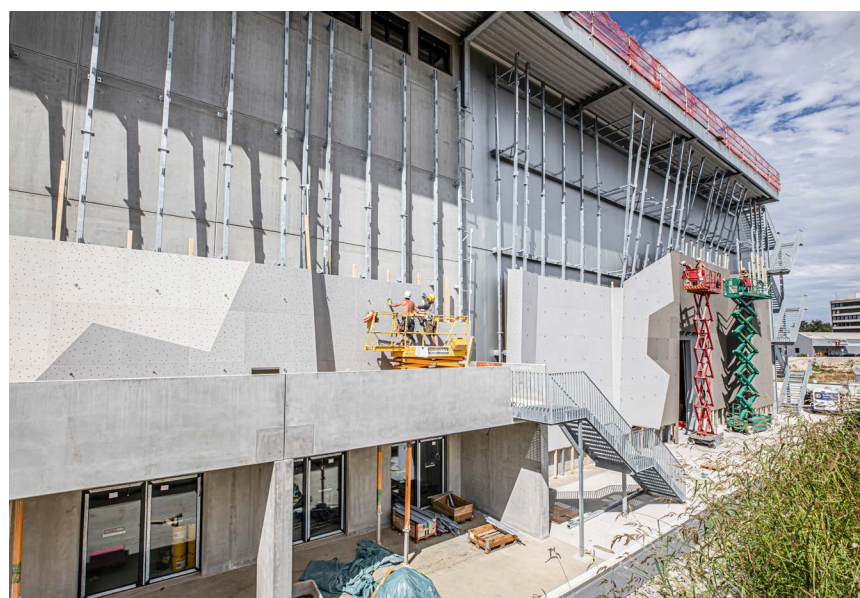
...TO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

SHAPING THE HISTORY



Sint Roc dates back to 1989 when we built the first, legendary Rock Master climbing wall at Arco, Italy. 30 years later we are still at the forefront, providing our clients with unparalleled expertise in designing, manufacturing and constructing climbing walls. We are proud to have contributed to the unprecedented growth of sport climbing and for having helped it become an Olympic sport. Some of the biggest developments in sport climbing were pioneered in our factory at Arco, such as the first climbing panels and holds used for Speed Climbing. Furthermore, since 2015 we are IFSC certified Speed Wall Manufacturer.

Our know-how is not limited to competition walls however. Over the last three decades we have built hundreds of climbing walls, from small school walls to enormous climbing gyms, all the while sharing our vast expertise with our extremely satisfied customers. After having worked closely with Gaswerk Kletterzentrum in Zurich for many years, this world-famous climbing center has once again entrusted Sint Roc to build what will be destined to become one of the biggest climbing walls in Europe, boasting more than 6000 square meters of climbing surface



DETAILS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

EDGE PROTECTION

- » low visual impact
- » safe & durable



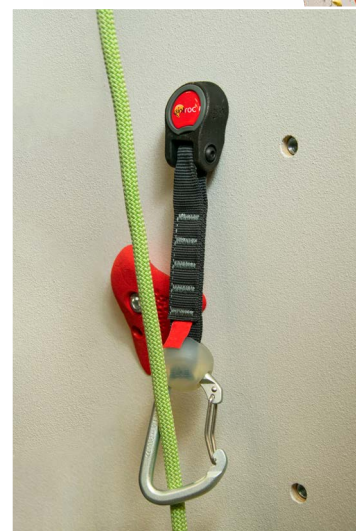
TOP BELAY POINT

- » steel plate
- » two independent belt points
- » two independent steel carabines
- » no chain



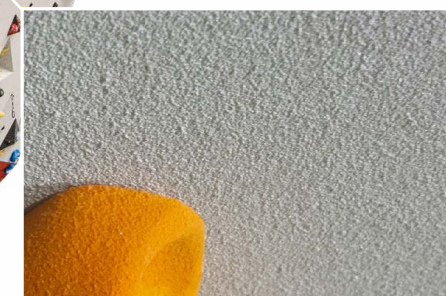
NEW INTERMEDIATE PROTECTION POINT

- » less noise
- » less sling & wall wear
- » no fingers trap risk



PANEL COATING

- » high resistance
- » excellent friction
- » easy cleaning
- » all RAL colours



HOLD INSERTS

- » large surface
- » high resistance thread



INTEGRATED ROUTE PLATE





Boulderwelt, Munich, 2020

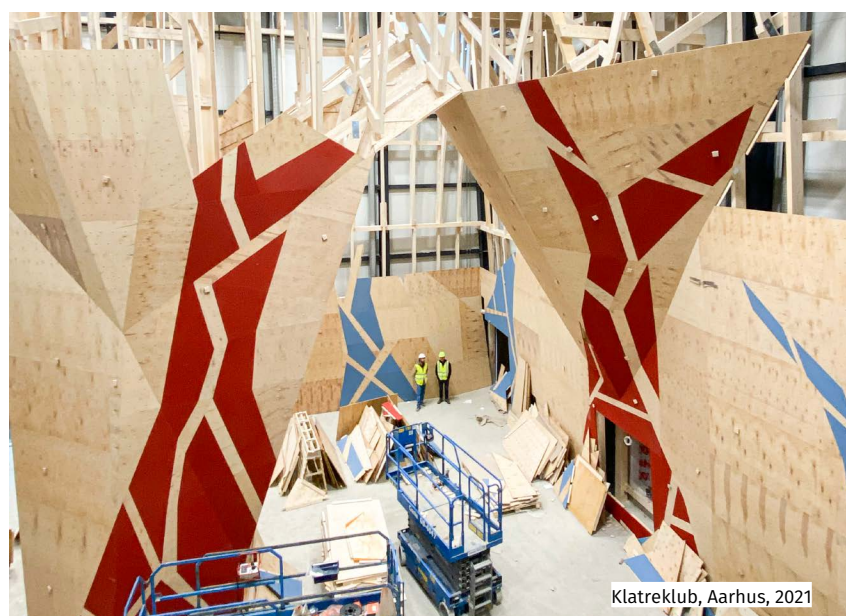


Indorwall, Manresa, 2020

ABOUT CITYWALL

By living and breathing climbing walls, Citywall has been present in the climbing industry for more than 25 years. With already more **than 35 completed projects in 2020, we are a total-solution provider for:**

- » indoor and outdoor climbing walls,
- » boulder and rope climbing walls,
- » climbing walls for schools and kindergardens,
- » playground equipment,
- » self-standing climbing towers,
- » mobile towers and boulders on a trailer,
- » climbing walls for pools,
- » private home walls and
- » any other custom-made climbing structures.



Klatreklub, Aarhus, 2021

THE PERFECT PARTNER

Citywall is a **global company** that provides an overall service in climbing walls production from a personalized idea to realization.

We take care of everything from climbing gym design, engineering, logistics, assembly, flooring solutions, holds, volumes, maintenance, financing and business planning.

- » We are the fastest company in terms of project implementation, thanks to our own production and assembling team,
- » we offer a variety of materials to choose from,
- » we execute complex constructions and crazy ideas,
- » we use and implement only the best materials on the market,
- » all products are made in accordance with all prescribed safety stand-

www.citywall.eu

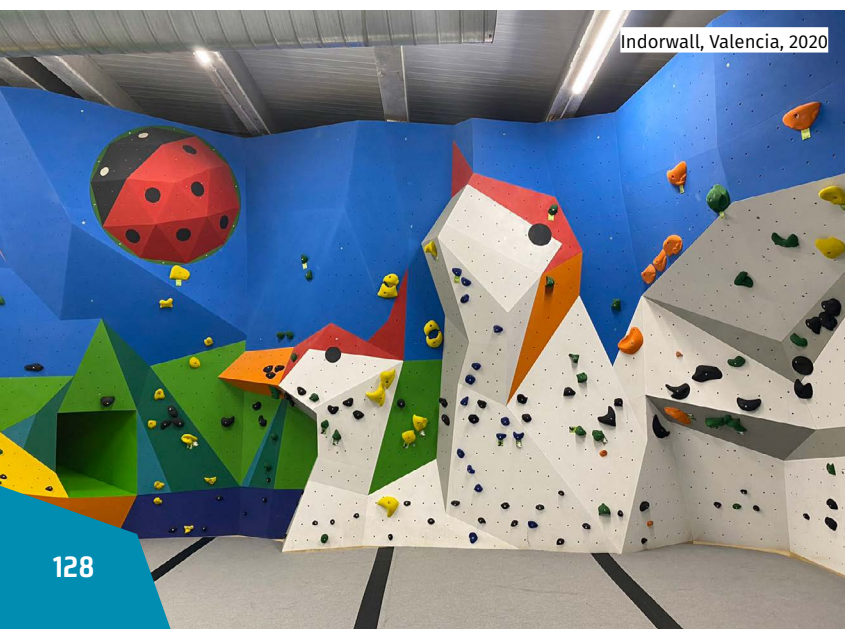
ards and they have passed all the required tests, certificates and statements of compliance,

» we are based in Slovenia, a country with the best alpinists and sport climbers in the world, so we have the opportunity to include in our team the experts that represent a new generation of climbing.

EXPERIENCED CLIMBERS

As a team of **experienced climbers**, we firmly believe that development is our driving force, as we are constantly introducing new solutions and continue to spearhead and develop new innovations. For us, nothing is impossible, so we are proud to undertake any kind of project despite its complexity.

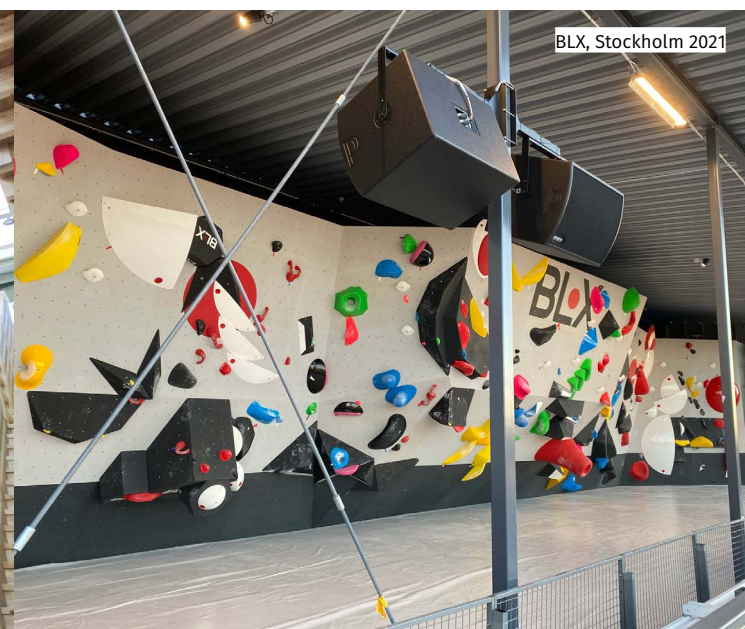
For more information contact us at info@citywall.eu.



Indorwall, Valencia, 2020



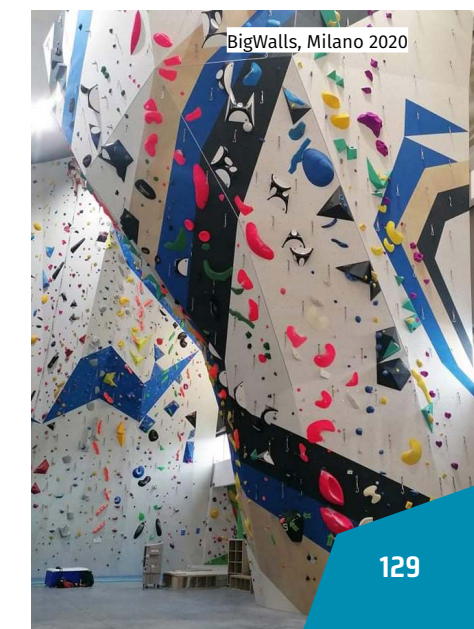
The Factory Boulder, San Sebastian, 2021



BLX, Stockholm 2021



Kilter board, Boulderwelt, Munich, 2020



BigWalls, Milano 2020



TOPOUT

PREMIUM CLIMBING WALLS

topout.eu

GYM OWNERS

Planning a new climbing facility investment? Hard to decide on supplier? Want to diminish risks to minimum? We've got you covered!

TOPOUT is a European climbing walls brand that stands for premium climbing walls in all aspects:

- » design and planning
- » modeling and processing
- » production and assembly
- » materials and services
- » quality management and assurance
- » constant research and development

We're always on time and 100 % transparent – no hidden agendas, no hidden costs, no extra charges. Because you deserve premium!

Contact us for your next climbing gym project and we'll be happy to support you realising premium gym for premium customers.

CONTACTS: info@topout.eu | www.topout.eu | + 386 31 838 484

ROUTESETTERS

YOU SET THE CHALLENGE, WE TAKE THE RISK.

If you're a routesetter and find it hard to finding solutions to ease your work or even extending your business, we've prepared a three collaboraiton options that could bring your routesetting business to the next level.

JUST DO WHAT YOU DO

Want to start working with a premium wall company but with no obligations? Want to have access to professional climbing wall manufacturer's consulting, design, support with consumables, special offers and similar?

With us, you have easy direct access for anything regarding premium climbing walls, so you can focus on serving your customers even better.

Joining our »basic« option is easy, at your own pace but and – it gets you rewarded.

EXTEND YOUR BUSINESS

When routesetting you see many needs on the market that we don't. We can work closely at meeting those needs.

»Advanced« collaboration is more streamed and market-focused. It supports routesetters when wanting to extend their business. We'll be happy to identify the best ways of collaboration together with you – meeting your goals by meeting the goals of your customers.

In advanced collaboration you get rewarded both financially and materially for extending your business and serving your customers.

DRAW YOUR LINE.

Most advanced routesetters often have wild ideas that no one thought of before and want to develop own solutions for the market. More often than not this comes with a real pain of development, financing, production – hard to have them all and still focus on primary business.

For professional routesetters that would like to express themselves even more, we're open to start working with you at your ideas development. Having access to our capacities - we'll take the development burden from you so you can focus on market.

We'll be happy to present you with the details of our »routesetters options« and discuss ways to starting the collaboration. All it takes is a call!

BASIC

ADVANCED

PRO



Photo: Norbert-Freudenthaler.com

Venue of the Austrian National Championships in Innsbruck

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.

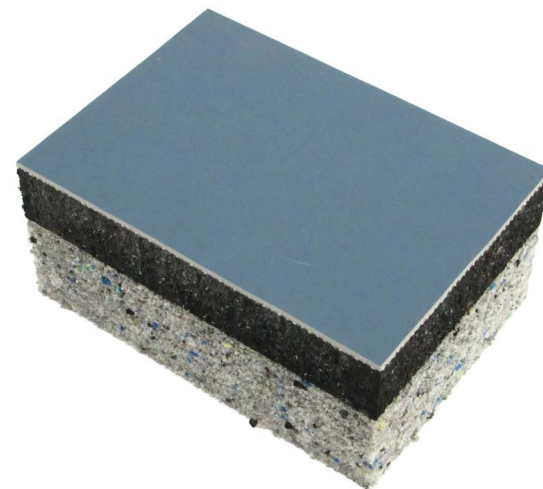
REGUPOL is one of the international market leaders in many product groups. REGUPOL developments and innovations are a result of systematic product and market research. The company operates on a global scale with eight production and distribution sites and around 700 employees worldwide.

Numerous climbing halls in Germany and abroad decided to go for the different REGUPOL special floorings for climbing.

REGUPOL CLIMB 77

There are many design options for this elastic safety flooring. Our huge colour range allows you to define safety zones, place logos or just create your individual flooring design. This elastic sports flooring ensures that the seriousness of injuries from falls can be minimised. With its seamless surface regugym climb is very easy to clean.

Burning behaviour: CfL-s1 as per DIN EN 13501-1



REGUPOL CLIMB 42

This indoor flooring is perfectly suitable for climbing halls with under-floor heating. Both REGUPOL climb 42 and REGUPOL climb 77 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, 16 design colours and 15 line marking colours to individualize your flooring.

Burning behaviour: Bfl-s1 as per DIN EN 13501-1



REGUPOL CLIMB FX

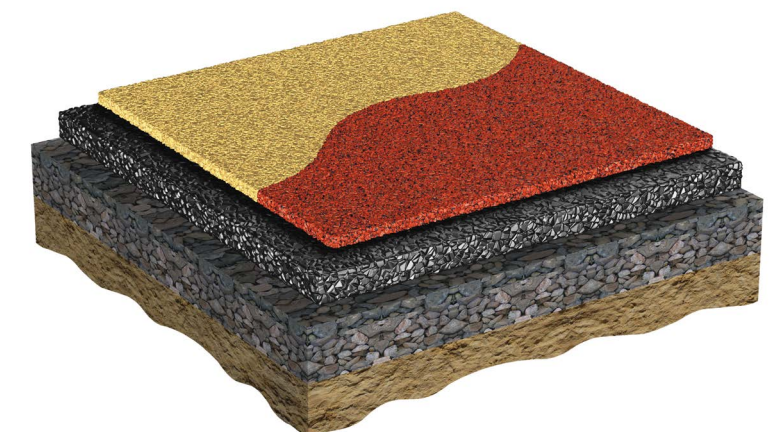
This outdoor flooring is permeable to water and dries quickly. It is used at outside climbing walls and protects them against pollution. You can select between different qualities and thicknesses. This elastic tile has been installed on children's playgrounds for decades. It warrants reliable protection pursuant to EN 1177 for critical fall heights.

Dimensions: 1,000 x 500 x 110 mm, other thicknesses possible

REGUPOL CLIMB FUN

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.



Bänfer[®]
SPORTMANUFAKTUR



SAFETY'S BEST FRIEND!

BOULDER FALLSCHUTZMATTE SKANDIA 100 / 150

BOULDER FALL PROTECTION MAT SKANDIA 100 / 150

Für spontane Klettersessions oder Enthusiasten mit Kletterrouten in den eigenen vier Wänden ist die SKANDIA Boulder-Fallschutzmatte der perfekte Begleiter. Dank des funktionell abgestimmten, Sandwikkerns aus Schaumstoff, eignet sich die SKANDIA 100 / 150 für Fallhöhen bis zu 300 cm und ist dank der geringen Höhe eine Alternative zu Weichböden.

Aber auch Kinder wollen klettern, turnen und spielen. Damit das ohne Verletzungen geht, bieten unsere Fallschutzmatten die bestmögliche Dämpfung. Mit einer robusten Tritteverteiler-Fläche bietet die Skandia zudem gute Standsicherheit. Die Hüllen der SKANDIA Fallschutzmatten bestehen aus einem robusten und leicht zu reinigenden Leichtplanenstoff bzw. Planenstoff mit rutschhemmender Unterseite aus Turnmattenstoff. Sie bietet somit den optimalen Fallschutz.

www.baenfer.de

Wir stehen für Qualität und Innovation. Aus der Mitte Deutschlands sorgen wir europaweit für sichere Kindergärten, Sport- und insbesondere Kletterhallen. Und auch das Klettern in den eigenen vier Wänden nimmt immer mehr zu mit Kletterwänden zum üben. Damit der Kletter Nachwuchs auch heile bleibt und ein sicheres Gefühl beim Fallen hat, gibt es unsere SKANDIA Matten, so dass auch Stürze keine schlimmeren Folgen haben.

Seit mehr als 35 Jahren stehen wir für absolut hohe Qualität in Verarbeitung und Material. Die SKANDIA Fallschutzmatte ist dabei das Premium Produkt unter den Fallschutzmatten mit einem sogenannten Kombikern, einer oberen Schicht aus Polyethylen, was die nötige Festigkeit und Härte mit sich bringt. Diese ist direkt verbunden mit einem PU-Schaumstoffsegment mit perfekten Dämpfungseigenschaften. Genau durch diese Kombination und einer ausgewogenen Härte wird verhindert, dass man in die Matte zu sehr einsinkt und im ungünstigen Fall sogar umknickt.

Unsere SKANDIA Fallschutzmatten sind geprüft und zertifiziert durch den TÜV Thüringen nach der sogenannten Spielplatznorm. Freie Stürze von bis zu 3m werden nach sorgfältiger und sehr strenger Prüfung, von der Skandia Fallschutzmatte risikofrei abgemildert, somit steht der nächsten Kletterwand-Action nichts im Weg.

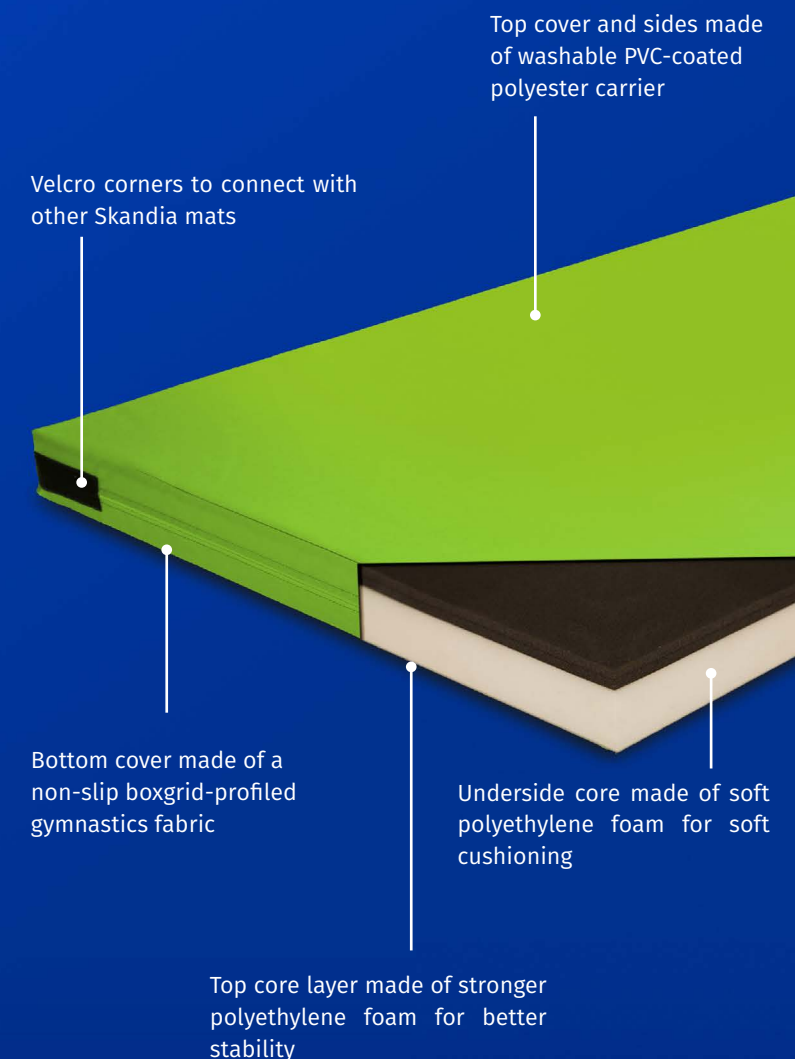
Unsere Fallschutzmatten Matten sind individuell einsetzbar und lassen sich gut verbauen, egal ob als fest installierte Matten oder einzelne Matten-Elemente zum Unterlegen.

The SKANDIA boulder fall protection mat is the perfect companion for spontaneous climbing sessions or enthusiasts with climbing routes in their home. Due to the functionally coordinated sandwich core made of foam, the SKANDIA 100/150 is suitable for drop heights of up to 300 cm and because its low height an alternative to soft floors.

But children also want to climb, do gymnastics and play. Our fall protection mats offer the best possible cushioning and with a robust step distribution surface, the SKANDIA also offers good stability. The covers of the SKANDIA fall protection mats are made of a robust and easy-to-clean lightweight tarpaulin or tarpaulin with a non-slip underside made of gymnastics mat material. It offers good stability and optimal fall protection.

We stand for quality and innovation. From the heart of Germany we ensure safe kindergartens and especially climbing halls across Europe. Climbing within your own four walls is also increasing with climbing walls to practice. And so that the young climbers stay healthy and have a safe feeling when falling, you should use SKANDIA mats, so that every fall has no worse consequences.

For more than 35 years we have stood for absolutely high quality in sportinggoods. The SKANDIA fall protection mat is the premium product among the fallprotection mats with a so-called combination core, an upper layer made of polyethylene, which provides the necessary strength and hardness, this is directly connected to a PU foam segment with perfect damping properties. And it is precisely this combination and a balanced hardness that prevents you from sinking too



- » Foams are made FCKW/CFC-free
- » PU-foams comply with the Oeko-Tex Standard 100 Product class I for baby items and the applicable requirements according to REACH
- » DIN EN 1176-1: 2017-12 and DIN EN 1177: 2018-03 tested and certified to a free fall height of up to 3m (TÜV Thüringen, 3510.00858.Z02)
- » Available as single mat elements or individually for rooms adapted by our project team
- » Available in many different colors

much into the mat and, in the worst case, even kinking. Our SKANDIA fall protection mats are tested and certified by German TÜV Inspection according to the so-called playground standard. Free falls of up to 3m are cushioned risk-free by the SKANDIA fall protection mat after careful and very strict examination, so nothing stands in the way of the next climbing wall action.

Our fall protection mats can be used individually and are easy to install, whether as permanently installed mats or individual mat elements to be placed under.



TRUBLUE
AUTO BELAY



TRUBLUE iQ - A FUTURE-PROOF PLATFORM SHIPPING 2021

The TRUBLUE iQ has all the great features of iQ+, minus catch-and-hold. With a lighter frame, more durable components, and improved retraction, the TRUBLUE iQ makes life easier for gym owners, and more enjoyable for climbers. Purchase the TRUBLUE iQ today and have the option to upgrade to iQ+ with catch-and-hold technology in 2022.

TRUBLUE - iQ SERIES AUTO BELAYS

ABOUT TRUBLUE

Leveraging our passionate approach and patented magnetic braking technology, we create clearly superior products and solutions for the recreation, amusement, and outdoor industries. That means better experiences for business owners and climbers alike.

TRUBLUE iQ+ | WORLD'S FIRST CATCH-AND-HOLD AUTO BELAY AVAILABLE 2022

Whether you're a beginner, a child, or a seasoned athlete, taking a break on the wall is essential to climbing. That's why we created a Catch-and-Hold belay that gives climbers the rest they need to finish routes.

CATCH-AND-HOLD BELAY

TRUBLUE iQ+ is the world's first catch-and-hold auto belay. TRUBLUE is no longer just a life-safety device. It's a climbing partner, allowing climbers to rest and project routes anytime. Experience what it's like to climb the crux with catch-and-hold belay.

Visit trubluclimbing.com/iQ to learn more.

BUILT-IN DURABILITY

Handmade in the USA and designed for heavy use, the iQ series is more durable (and lighter) than ever before. From improved, wider webbing, to a built-in back bumper and replaceable mount guard, the iQ and iQ+ are made to last both indoors and out.

MAGNETIC BRAKING

TRUBLUES work as reliably as your compass points north. That's because TRUBLUE is the only auto belay that uses friction-free magnetic braking, which responds to every climber individually, providing consistent, smooth descents regardless of weight.

FUTURE PROOF

Designed on an Internet of Things platform, TRUBLUE iQ+ is a smart auto belay. With built-in connectivity, it is ready for future feature releases from data downloads to service reminders to photo and video capabilities — all straight from your device.



NEW AND IMPROVED WEBBING

The TRUBLUE iQ and iQ+ Auto Belays are fitted with an improved, wider webbing that can be replaced in the field by the owner. Replacement webbing comes with your choice of connector — aluminum carabiner, steel carabiner, adventure webbing or open loop — and is available in two lengths: 41 ft (12.5 m) and 65.6 ft (20 m).



ACCESSORIES

TRUBLUE iQ+ Buttons: Ultra durable touchpad used to activate iQ+'s catch-and-hold feature.

TRUBLUE iQ+ Battery: An extra battery ensures your iQ+ is always ready for action.

Mounting Kit: A turnkey kit for single-point mounting of your TRUBLUE iQ or iQ+ Auto Belay.

Belay Gate: A simple way to reinforce the proper use of auto belay devices and minimize the potential risk from climber error.

TRU-Mount: Designed specifically for use as a climbing anchor.



With hundreds of climbers coming through our gym in one day, air quality plummets unless managed. ClimbLab filters have transformed the experience on a busy night and our team and customers appreciate it.

Ged MacDomhnaill CEO & Founder, The Climbing Hangar Group



MODULAR HOLD CLEANING SYSTEM

- » Safe and ergonomic work environment for your staff. No acid fumes!
- » 20 times less water compared to pressure washin
- » Fast payback due to significant labour reduction

CLEAN HOLDS



A REVOLUTION IN CLEANING

The ultrasonic cleaner and our biodegradable alkaline detergent cleans your holds while you create value elsewhere. With the pressure washing booth you can clean large volumes indoor without changing to waterproof clothing. Our modular system can be configured to an optimal setup for every climbing gym.

MODULAR CHALK DUST REMOVAL SYSTEM

- » Electrostatic filter combined with a high air flow fan for superior performance
- » The A+ rated filter consumes 3 x less energy than conventional filters
- » Wash and reuse the filter cassettes year after year! No costs for disposable bag filters

CLEAN AIR



THE RIGHT SETUP FOR A DUST FREE GYM

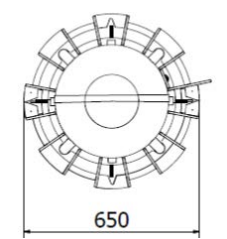
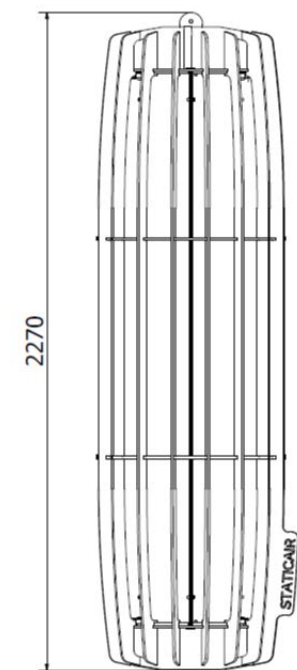
ClimbLab filters are very compact and come in three sizes with different installation options. We recommend to filter the total air volume of you gym 3-5 times per hour. As all climbing gyms are unique we will help you find the optimal solution.



STATIC AIR
FINE DUST FREE



Also available in XS version



- » >50% cleaner air
- » Easy maintenance
- » Sustainable
- » 18 watts power consumption
- » Proven Patented technology
- » Made in The Netherlands
- » Plug & Play
- » Silent Operation

HEALTHY AIR QUALITY STARTS HERE CLIMB CHALK DUST FREE!

STATICAIR IS MARKET LEADER IN THE REDUCTION OF (ULTRA-) FINE CHALK DUST IN CLIMBING GYMS.

Besides chalk dust, the PMX manages to capture harmful invisible air pollution particles like microplastics, micrometals, viruses (COVID-19), bacteria etc.. How will you meet climber's healthy lifestyle goals? Are you ready to offer a healthier, more comfortable climbing experience?

PMX HELPS PROTECTING PEOPLE'S RESPIRATORY TRACT HEALTH.

The PMX's unique patented technology is at its best to remove PM10, PM2,5 and particles smaller than PM1 from indoor air. Those are the particle sizes responsible for chronic health problems as they easily enter into our body and bloodstream.



Experience immediate Air Quality Improvement

PROTECT THE HEALTH OF YOUR CUSTOMERS, PUBLIC AND STAFF!
FACILITATE BETTER, CLEANER CHAMPIONSHIPS!

"JOIN THE WORLD'S CLEAN AIR GYMS"

"The air quality in our climbing gym has greatly improved by the systems of StaticAir."

Escaladrome
Hannover - Germany

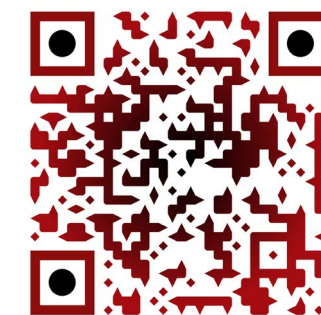


"We're continually looking for better solutions to a problem that plagues our industry: chalk dust in the air. We're tremendously excited about StaticAir's products. They're highly energy efficient, silent, and stylish."

Seattle Bouldering Project
Seattle - United States

"Staticair's PMX is very energy efficient, operates in absolute silence, without experiencing any draught effects. We noticed direct visual air quality improvement with our PMX installations, benefitting customers and staff and our public."

Berta Block
Berlin - Germany



MORE INFO?
SCAN QR-CODE



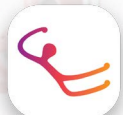
FOLLOW OUR SOCIAL CHANNELS



RECOMMENDED BY CLIMBERS

2021

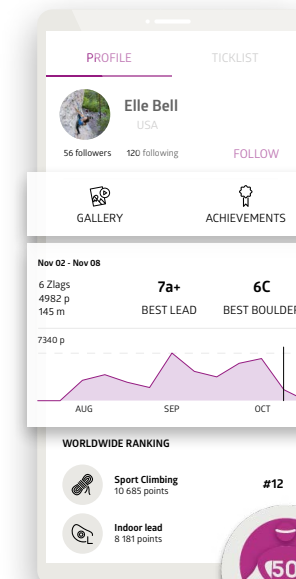




Vertical-Life

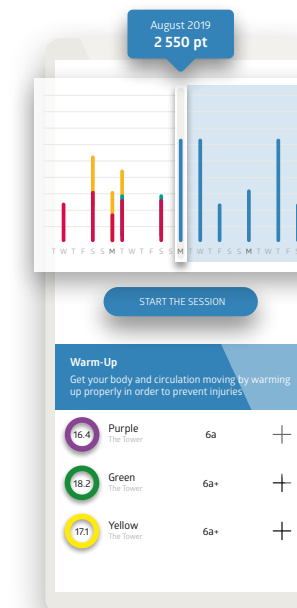


APP FEATURES



YOUR PROFILE

- » Personal logbook
- » Statistics and insights
- » Rankings
- » Follow your friends
- » New route notifications
- » Collect achievement badges



TRAINING

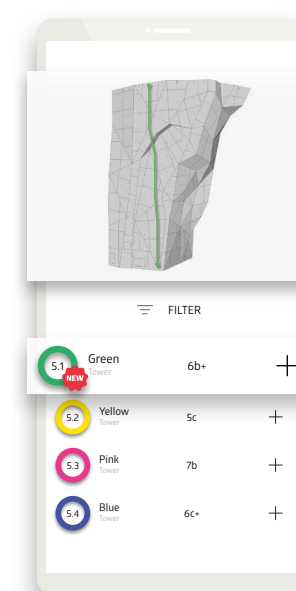
- » Custom to your gyms routes and boulders
- » Bespoke plans and workouts
- » Statistics and insights
- » Scheduling and alerts

VERTICAL-LIFE APP

FEATURES FOR CLIMBERS, MADE BY CLIMBERS.

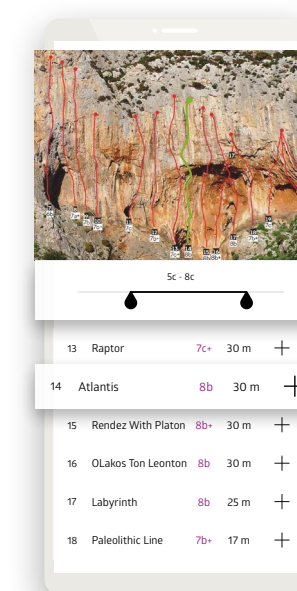
The Vertical-Life App is a digital climbing guide, social network and training log for outdoor and indoor climbers. Raise customer engagement and retention by connection your gym to the app! With full digital topos for 4800 crags and 321 gyms around the world the app is an essential resource for any climber.

It also provides a training feature for a fast growing number of participating climbing gyms. Monthly challenges, personal achievements and the training log add gamification and motivation to the users climbing routines.



GYM TOPOS

- » Full gym map
- » Sector overviews
- » Route and boulder details
- » Easily search and filter
- » Add routes to your logbook
- » Comment and leave feedback for routesetters



OUTDOOR TOPOS

- » Full digital topos
- » Routes lists and details
- » Access and description info
- » Sector overviews
- » Easily search and filter
- » Comment and share



2K+

GYMS
WORLDWIDE



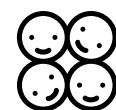
1.5M+

ROUTES &
BOULDERS



10.5M+

ASCENTS



360K+

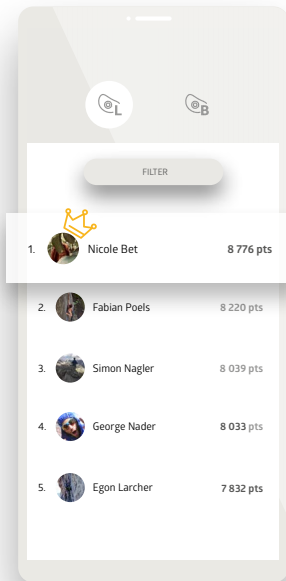
Vertical-Life
USERS

"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)

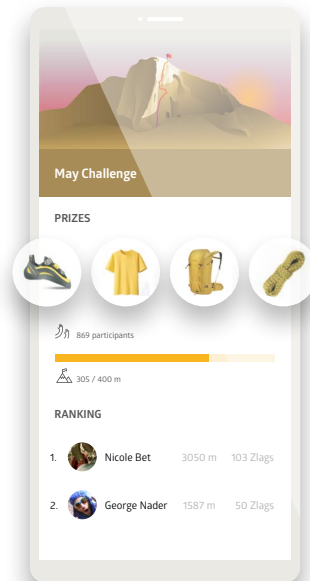
VIRTUAL LEAGUES

The latest updates to the app focuses on bringing your gyms community to life with features to help organise engaging, and COVID safe, events in your gym.



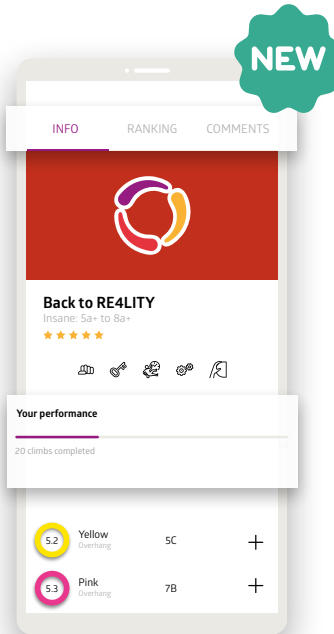
RANKING GAMES

- » Gym rankings
- » Worldwide ranking
- » Competition with friends



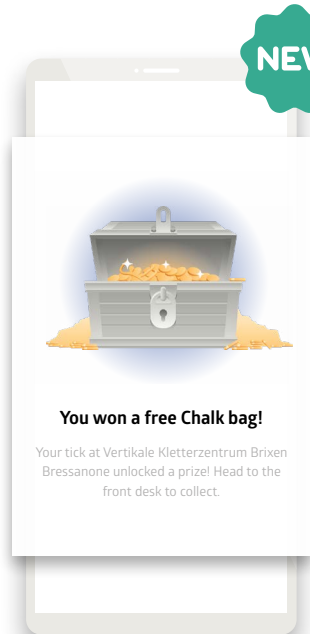
CHALLENGES

- » Global sponsored events
- » Win prizes
- » Achieve climbing milestones



CIRCUITS & COMPETITIONS

- » Create custom circuits from the routes and boulders in your gym
- » Add rankings and run competitions
- » Give away prizes
- » Track progress in the Smart Climbing gym



TREASURE HUNTS

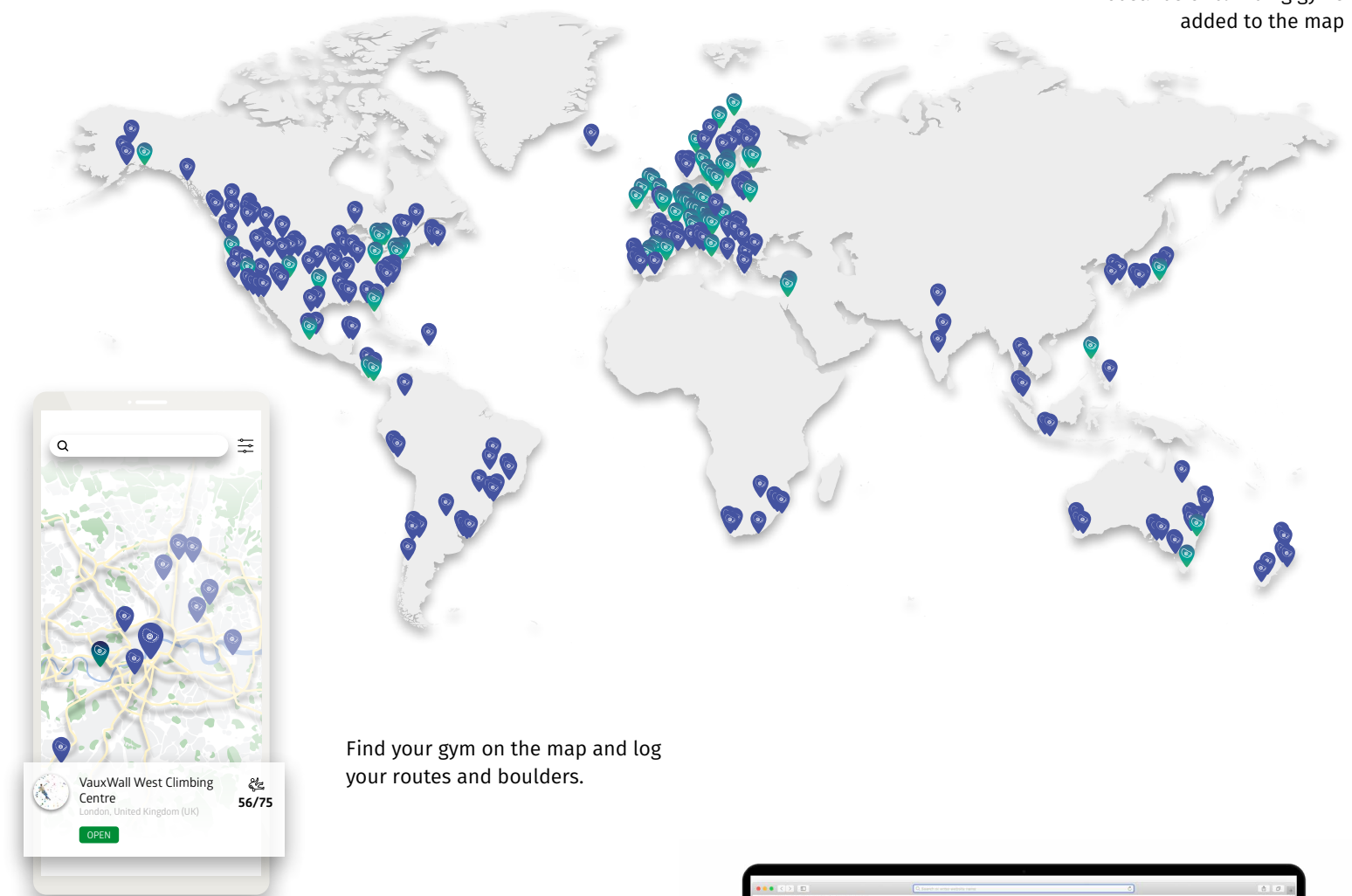
- » Gym sponsored events
- » Hidden prizes in your gym
- » Zlag your routes for a chance to win

YOUR GYM IS NOW ON THE VERTICAL-LIFE APP!



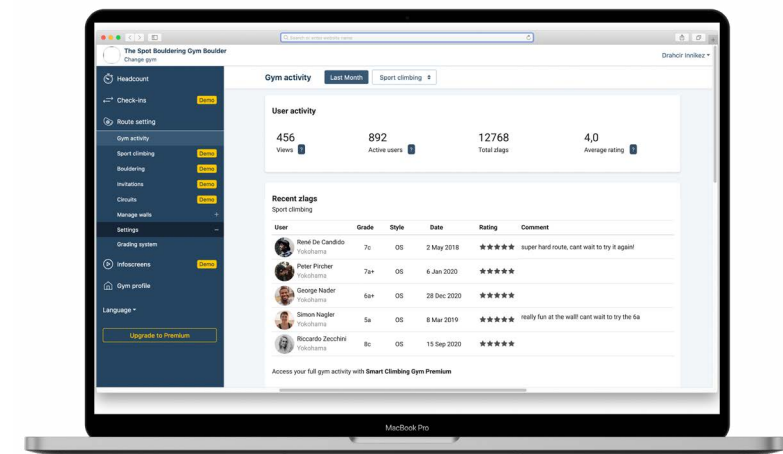
WE'VE PINNED GYMS ALL OVER THE WORLD

- » Tick routes and boulders in any gym
- » Find out opening hours, and basic gym info
- » Unlock the full potential of the Smart Climbing Gym



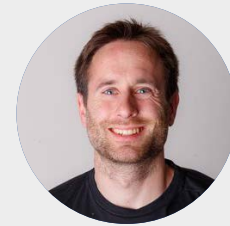
Thousands of climbing gyms added to the map

Manage a gym? Get in touch to claim your Free Gym Profile. Add info about your gym, grading settings and follow along with your gyms activity feed and discover the potential of upgrading to the Smart Climbing Gym.





UNDERSTAND YOUR CLIMBERS AND OPTIMIZE YOUR ROUTE SETTING



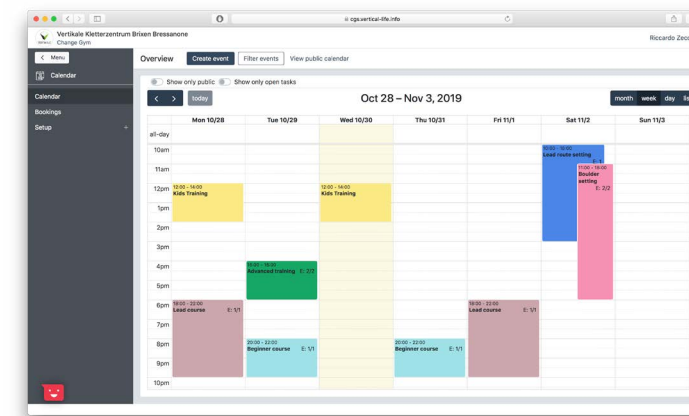
"Vertical-Life continuously improves their already solid product. One example of this is the new feature "Gym Activity". With this feature I get practical feedback for route setting in our gym which allows me to optimize planning and managing the routes and boulders problems we set."

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



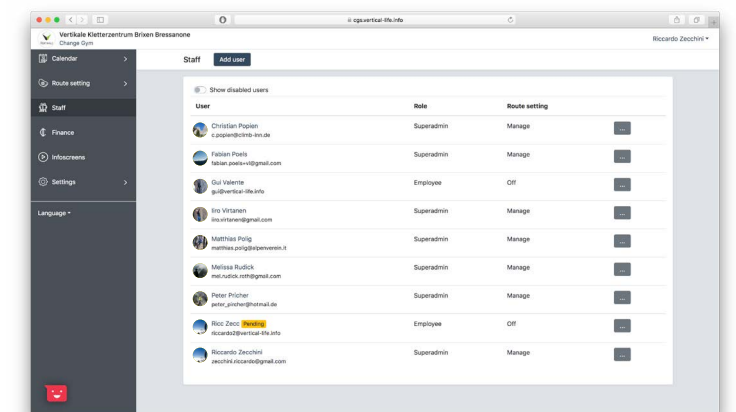
"Vertical-Life allows me to have a good and complete overview of what there is and what would be needed for the clients of our gym from the route setting point of view. It gives us the tools to collect feedback and keep developing in the right direction".

© Florian Murnig

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 Klatreklubb, 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 app.

FREE GYM PROFILE

NEW

- » Gym profile on Vertical-Life App
- » Headcount tracker

BOOKING MANAGEMENT SUITE

NEW

- » Check-in management system
- » Digital course booking tools
- » Customizable slot booking
- » Staff & task management
- » POS integration
- » Gym profile on Vertical-Life App
- » Headcount tracker

DIGITAL ROUTE SETTING SUITE

- » Route setting management tools
- » Custom digital topos
- » Infoscreens and web iframe
- » Analytics and insights
- » Staff & task management
- » POS integration
- » Gym profile on Vertical-Life App
- » Headcount tracker

CHECK-IN MANAGEMENT: **NEW** KEEP YOUR CLIMBERS AND STAFF SAFE WITH NEW CAPACITY CONTROLS

Your gym's entrance and the front desk will be crucial points when it comes to social distancing measures and will require a well-defined process to keep climbers and your staff safe.

Our Slot-booking and Check-in feature help you monitor and organize the visiting times of each individual climber and stagger their check-in and check-out times so that you can avoid large crowds and queues. Climbers can show up in intervals (e.g. every 15 minutes) with a pre-booked slot rather than all arriving at the same time.

The Check-in feature also integrates with your gyms capacity limits, not only giving your team peace of mind at the front desk managing checkins, but a real time view of capacity and head-count across the gym at any given moment.


860K+
SUCCESSFUL
BOOKINGS



"The new check-in system has become a really important tool, now more than ever, for keeping our gym safe and operating as smoothly as possible."

Satoru Onda
(Managing Director at B-Pum, Japan)



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?

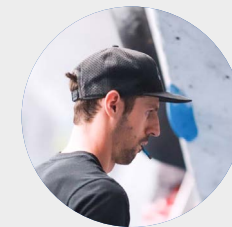
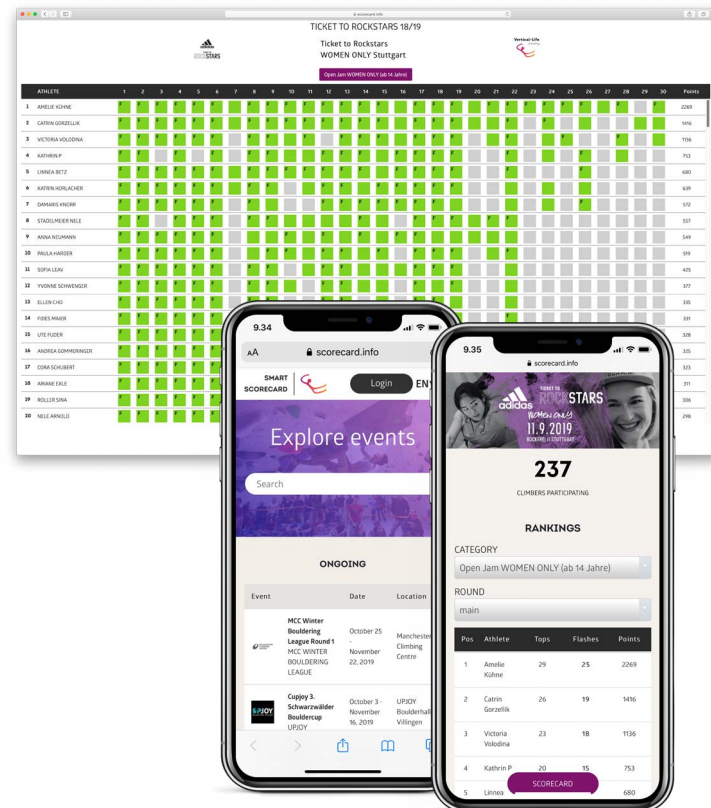
The Smart Scorecard by Vertical-Life puts an end to paper registration and scoring and offers a series of benefits for organizers and climbers.

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 organizer, 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!"

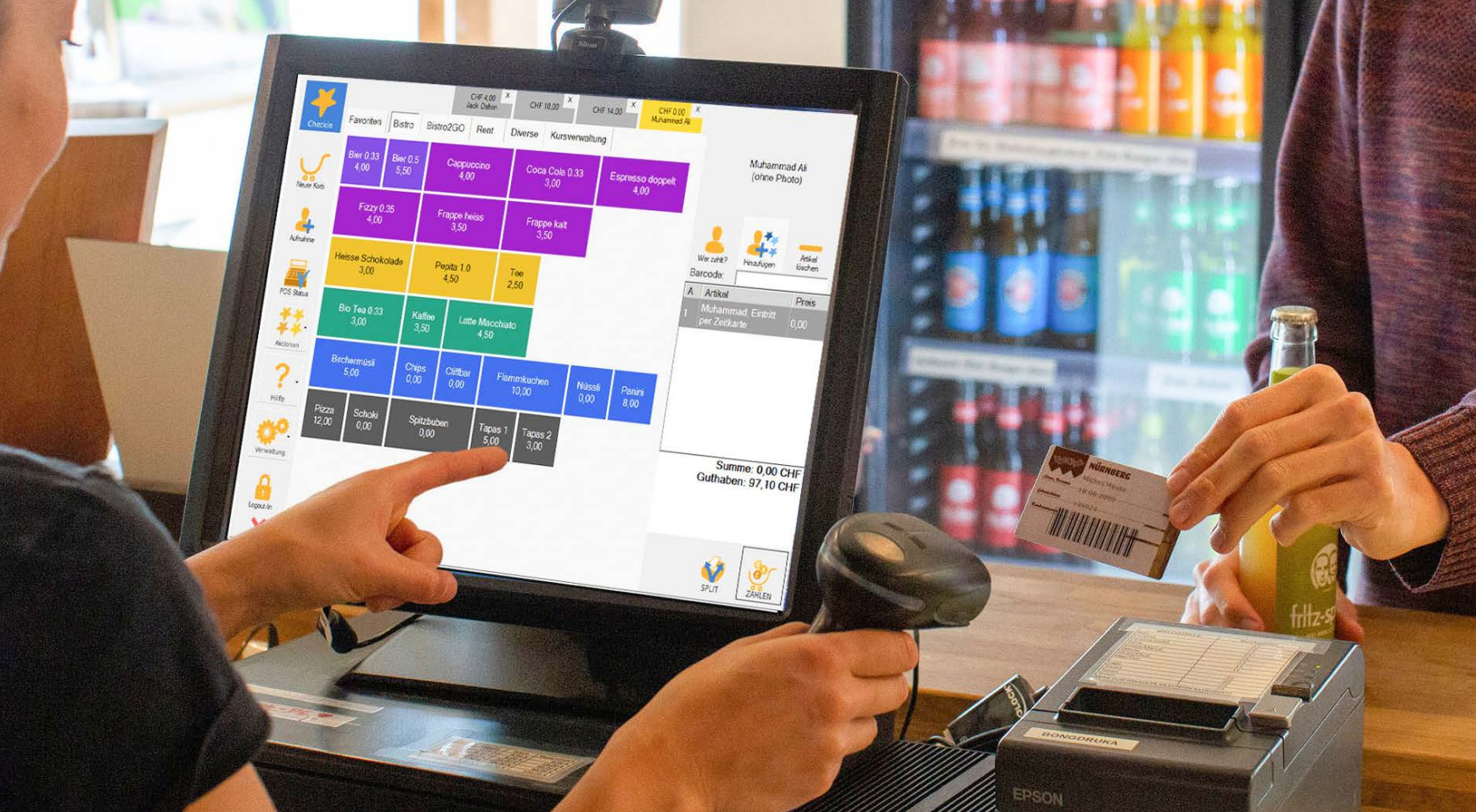
Mike Langley
(Event organizer, Head Route Setter
at the Castle Climbing Centre UK and
IFSC commentator)



"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)





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, Luxemburg 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 professional hardware systems including POS peripherals. Access controls such as turnstiles can also be integrated.

ACCESSORIES

Member passes, barcode & RFID cards - comfortable accessories are easily integrated.

VERTICAL LIFE INTEGRATION

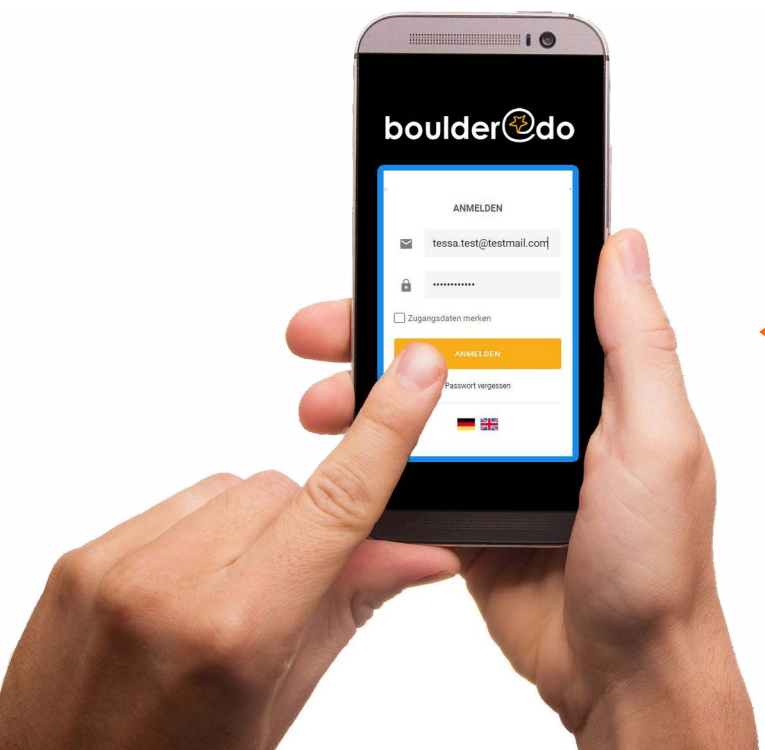
Boulderado works closely with Vertical Life. We support VL slot- and course bookings as well as mobile checks.



VariPOS 256S

ONLINE REGISTRATION

Your new customers can register via QR Code on their smartphone or directly on your homepage including photo and electronic signatur.





NINJA TIMER

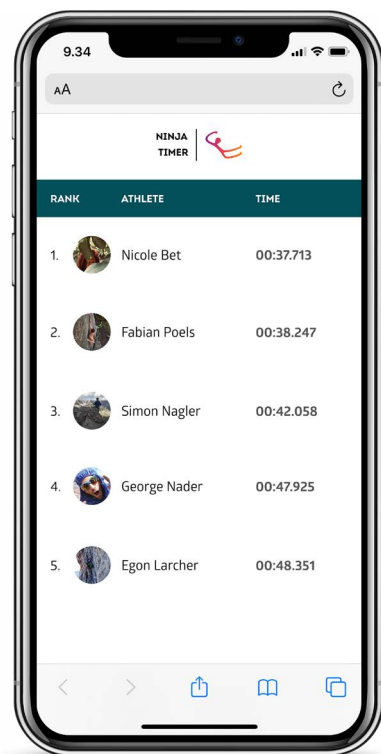
THE FIRST INTERACTIVE, CABLE-LESS TIMING SYSTEM DESIGNED FOR CLIMBING

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.

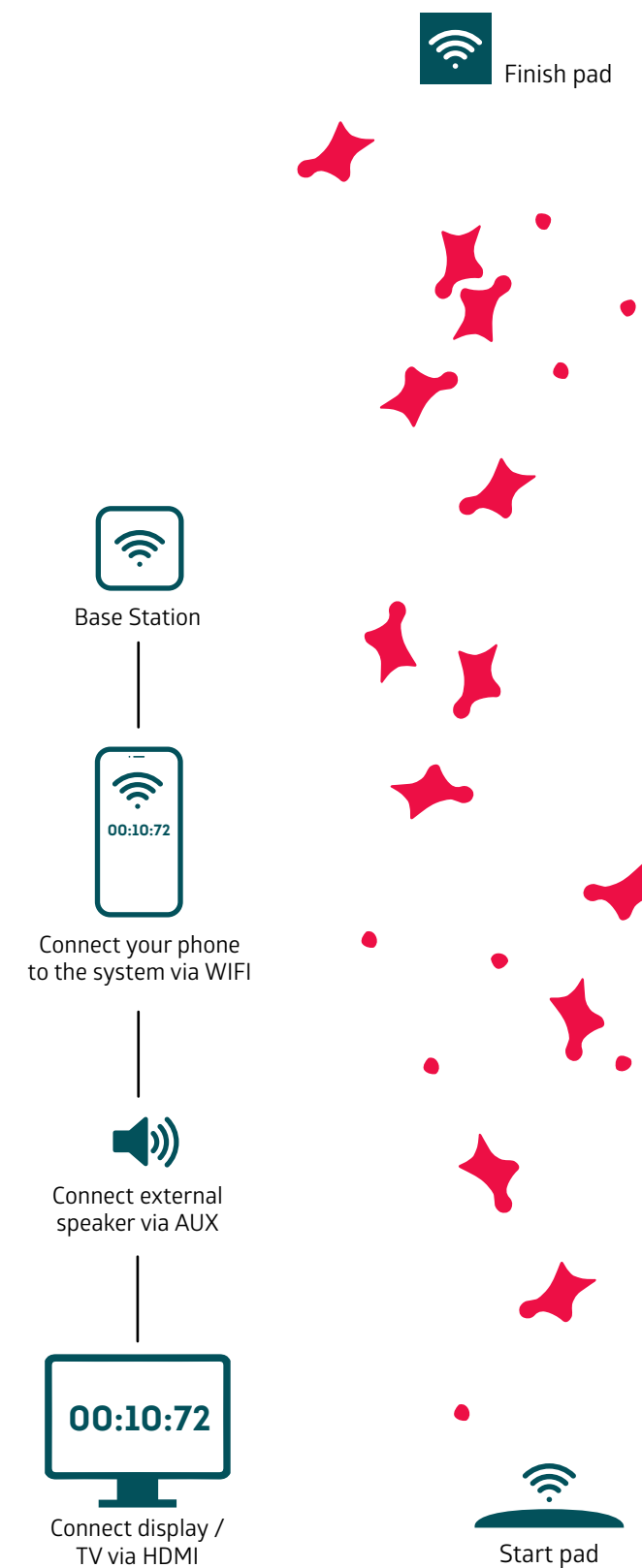
EFFICIENT TRAINING AND COMPETITIONS:

- » 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:

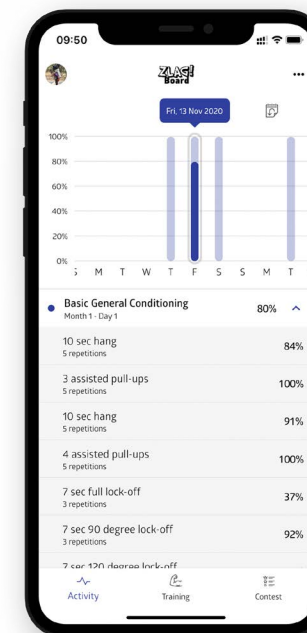
- » Portable, cable-less setup: assemble and disassemble in just a few minutes
- » Control via any smartphone, tablet or laptop
- » WIFI enabled, wireless timing system



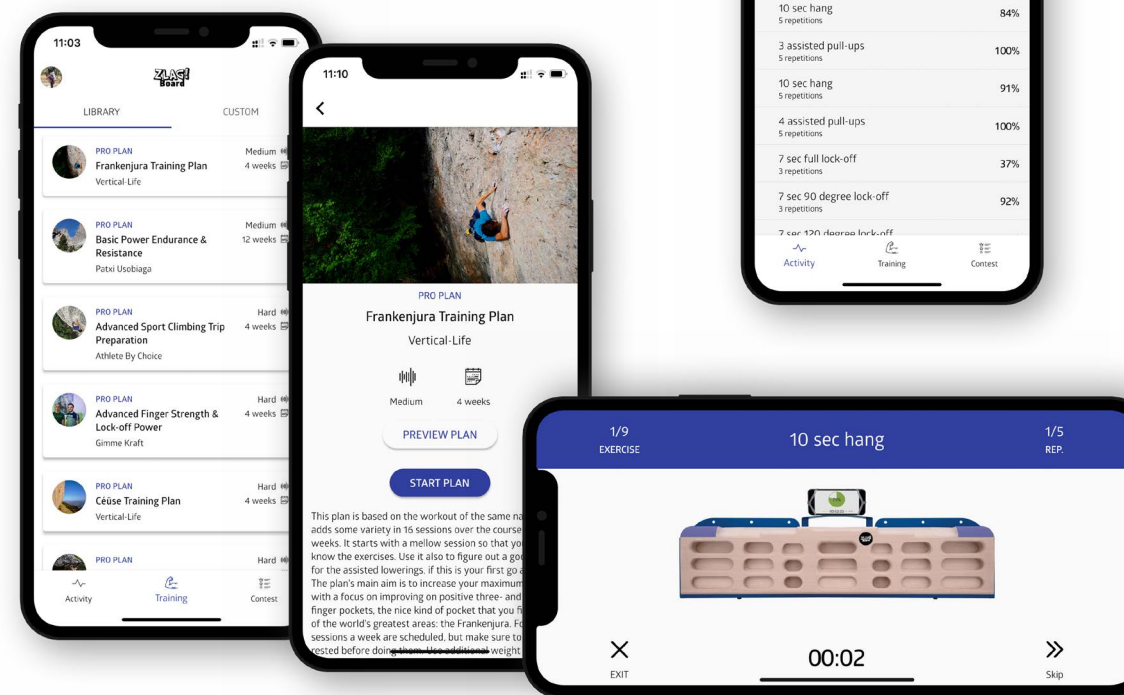


NEW ZLAGBOARD PLANS

The zlagboard brings cutting edge training knowledge right to your fingertips. Zlagboard teamed up with some of the best coaches to develop a hangboard training program. Now you can train for your next big adventure with tailored training plans specifically adapted for the routes and boulders of some of the most famous climbing destinations around the world. Train hard for your next trip to Frankenjura, Fontainebleau, Céüse.



TRACK YOUR IMPROVEMENTS
Performances (completion rates) are saved in the training log, allowing you to get detailed statistics.



ZLAGBOARD - TRAIN SMART, CLIMB HARD!
THE ULTIMATE LOCKDOWN TRAINING TOOL

Paired with its app, the award winning (and patented) Zlagboard puts an end to hand-written notes, spreadsheets and stop-watches to estimate hangtimes. 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.

100% MADE IN SOUTH TYROL

All Zlagboards are manufactured by craftsmen in our home region of South Tyrol in the heart of the Alps.

COMMUNITY STATISTICS



6 427 hours
hang-time



3 943 379
pull-ups



"Zlagboard is specifically designed to help with improvement, but also it's the best motivator. I used it during the lockdown and that was the only thing that helped to stay fit."

Farnaz Esmailzadeh
(Pro climber, coach and route setter, Iran)



ZLAGBOARD.CONTEST

YOUR FAVOURITE COMPETITION GOES VIRTUAL!
Now you can compete with friends and the pros from your own home or wherever you zlagboard! Create your own local contest, invite friends or take on the best of the best and join the global ranks!



**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.

KRAXLBOARD THE WALL

The multifunctional training wall with tiltable suspension.

With this new training board different degrees of difficulty are possible, thanks to the infinitely variable inclination adjustment of up to 24°. This detail turns the board into an absolute expert tool with an unbelievable variety of grips in different levels of difficulty. The wall bracket provides sufficient distance from the wall and thus ensures enough legroom during the training.



VERTICAL PRO



PLATFORM
FOR VERTICAL
PROFESSIONALS

Nov 25 – 26, 2022

Messe Friedrichshafen

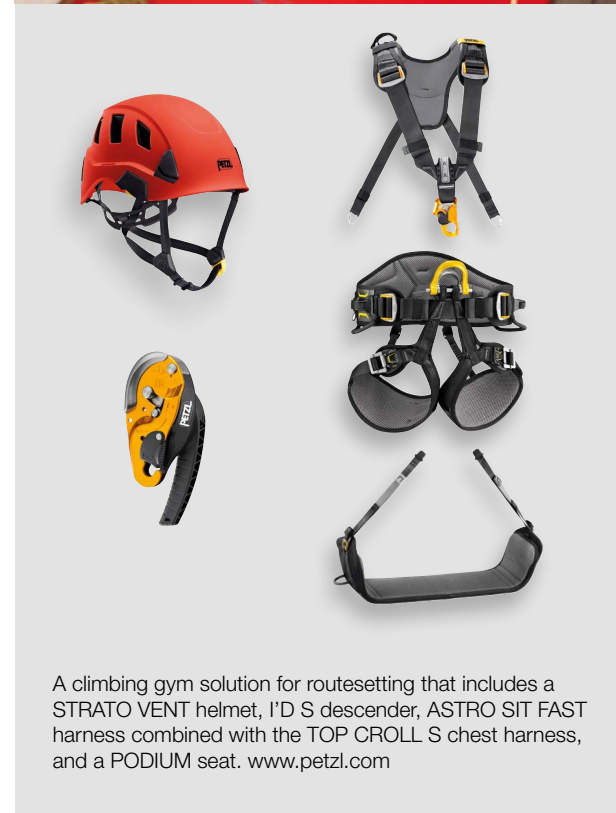
Sport und Arbeit in der Vertikalen – darum geht es bei der neuen Messe „VERTICAL PRO“.

Diese Veranstaltung ist der neue Treffpunkt für Kletterhallen- und Seilgartenbetreiber, Seilzugangstechniker und Hilfsorganisationen. Das Thema Sicherheitstechnik ist dabei ein zentrales Thema aller Messe-Segmente. Hier bietet die Messe VERTICAL PRO ideale Synergie-Effekte – nicht nur bezüglich der Produktwelt, sondern auch im Hinblick auf Testen, Kontakten, Lernen und Erfahren. Daher hat sich auch die FISAT zum aktiven Mitwirken entschlossen. Weitere starke Partner sind **Halls & Walls** sowie die **IAPA**.

Vertical sport and work is what it's all about at the new "VERTICAL PRO" show.

This event represents the new meeting place for operators of climbing halls and high rope courses, for rope access technicians and for relief organisations. The topic of safety technology is a key theme of all segments of the fair. The VERTICAL PRO trade fair offers great opportunity for synergy – not only with regard to the product world but also when it comes to trying things out, establishing new contacts, learning new techniques and experiencing everything the industry has to offer. FISAT has thus decided to also play an active role in the fair. Other strong partners of the fair include **Halls & Walls** and **IAPA**.

www.vertical-pro.com



MAKING YOUR WORK EASIER

When setting routes on a climbing wall, you need a lot of imagination to offer climbers a rich, pleasant, and demanding experience. It means having specific skills as well as the right equipment. Petzl places all of its expertise at the disposal of routesetters to provide them with the very best equipment, giving free rein to their creativity—as seen here with Florence Pinet working in the ClimUp gym in Aix-en-Provence, France.

A climbing gym solution for routesetting that includes a STRATO VENT helmet, I'D S descender, ASTRO SIT FAST harness combined with the TOP CROLL S chest harness, and a PODIUM seat. www.petzl.com



LEARN MORE



Access
the
inaccessible®



System wall - frame 2021

Kilterboard, Moonboard, Brand-Board



The benkyclimbing system wall frame 2021 is available for all setups such as Kilterboard, Moonboard, Tensionboard or as Brand Board. Equipped with brand board panels, it offers every grip manufacturer or hall operator the possibility to design his own system or definition board. The frames can also be used simply as an adjustable spraywall. We produce "custom frames" freestanding or mounted to a wall. With tilt adjustment (via app or switch on the frame) from 10 to -70 degrees of overhang in 16 seconds, it is the fastest electronically adjustable board on the market and the first system wall for slab climbing in the world. Using new patented mechanics, our frames are 100% synchronous.

benkyclimbing.com