

#5
2022/23

ROUTE SETTER

a magazine for route setters
and climbing gyms

RSM INTERNATIONAL SURVEY
highlights from 2022

LORDS OF THE BOARDS
a history of training boards

CLIMBING IN SINGAPORE
the inside story

ROUTE SETTING & RED-S
the first line of defense

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EDITOR'S NOTE

TAKE FIVE

This issue marks five years of Route Setter Magazine! Reaching this milestone makes us feel proud and humble at the same time. And it's only because of you, our readers and industry professionals, that we're able to celebrate this achievement. Without your enthusiasm, shared love for climbing, and commitment to professionalism, we wouldn't be here. So, first and foremost, THANK YOU!

The illustrious surf pioneer Gerry Lopez coined the phrase “surf is where you find it.” We think the same sentiment rings true and maybe even a little louder for climbing. Thanks to indoor climbing's adaptable, urban component, it opens up a lifestyle and community to so many people who might otherwise not be exposed to it. The profoundness of that should not be underestimated. Just think for a moment about where you'd be without climbing. It's amazing to think that from your introduction to climbing all the way to that one elusive move that keeps you trying, climbing can have such a dramatic impact on how you live and move through this world.

Climbing reminds us to be happy and regularly restores that feeling, but – just as importantly – it reminds us to be resilient and patient. It exposes us to the importance of ingenuity, sociability, inclusivity, and responsibility – all of which are crucial in today's modern world. After all, this is exactly what the unexpected developments of the last few years have taught us.

It's up to all of us to keep climbing, climbing. We hope the stories and people covered in this issue keep your psyche for climbing and the desire to unlock that elusive move ticking over.

Happy reading,
The Vertical-Life Team



Climbing District, Paris, France

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MEET THE NEW ROUTESETTING SHOES BY THE NORTH FACE

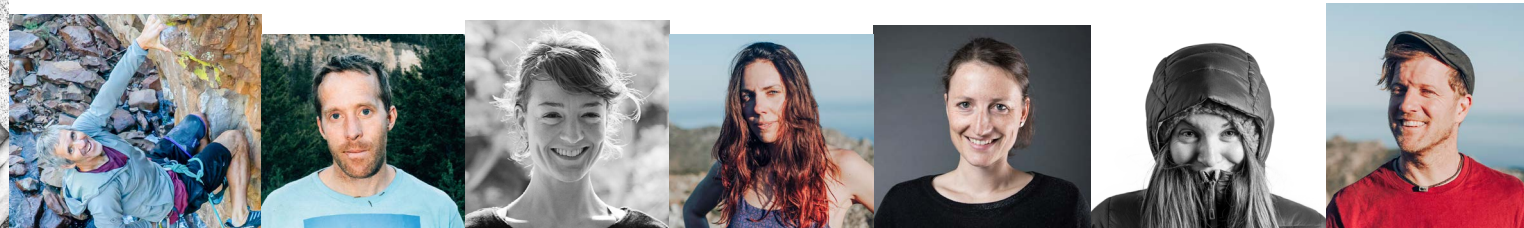
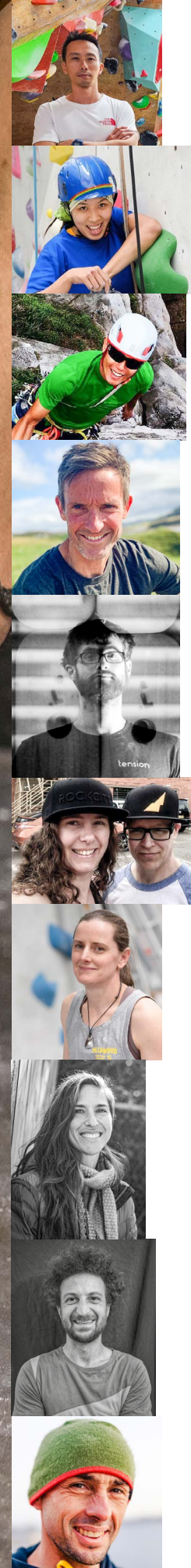
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Holds & volumes, software solutions, walls & infrastructure, training tools, safety & climbing equipment



LORDS OF THE BOARDS

TEXT & INTERVIEWS: FLO SCHEIMPFLUG

◆ Found in the basements, garages, and attics of hard movers, homemade training boards – or “woodies” as they are also known – were among the first specific training tools for climbers back in the early 1990s. Small and inexpensive, they could be set up by anyone with a drill and some crafting skills.

Fast forward a few decades and training boards have since entered the mainstream, transforming the way climbers train. In fact, hardly any climbing gym can do without them. But how did they manage to shake the image of being a niche product for hard movers only? The answer lies in technology, which has paved the way for a new era of training boards equipped with LED systems and apps with databases containing thousands of problems. Whether they are trying the latest benchmark boulder by their favorite pro or just want to climb endurance rounds, climbers of all ages and abilities are today united by the simplicity and effectiveness offered by training boards.

Despite the rapid growth of the indoor climbing market, the number of companies manufacturing app-based training boards has stayed surprisingly small. For the following feature, we spoke to the masterminds behind the MoonBoard, Tension Board, and Kilter Board about their different concepts, the pitfalls they encountered during product development, and what the training boards of the future might look like.

◆ **THE MOONBOARD** (p.6)
BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH BEN MOON

◆ **THE TENSION BOARD** (p.8)
BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH WILL ANGLIN

◆ **THE KILTER BOARD** (p.10)
BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH JACKIE HUEFTLE



Photo: Claudia Ziegler

FLO SCHEIMPFLUG

Born: 1977

Lives in: Hallein, Austria

Background: Flo is a freelance journalist, book author, artist, and founder of Climax Magazine. He has been climbing for 20+ years with first ascents from Madagascar to China under his belt. When he's not climbing, he's writing about climbing, its history and culture.



THE MOONBOARD

BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH BEN MOON

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MOONCLIMBING.COM

◆ *The city of Sheffield in the UK was an epicenter of climbing as early as the 1980s, with many of the country's strongest climbers living here to be closer to the Peak District's famous gritstone rock faces. The concentration of so much talent in one place not only had a huge impact on the evolution of climbing, but also turned Sheffield into a breeding ground for progressive concepts, including the MoonBoard.*

FROM SHEFFIELD TO THE MOON

The MoonBoard has a fascinating history. Back in the 1980s, climbing training was still in its infancy and, for Sheffield-based rock climbers like Jerry Moffatt and Ben Moon, it consisted of traverses on the city's brick walls, endless pull-up sessions, or just more climbing. On one of his trips to the United States, Jerry met American rock climber John Bachar, who – like Jerry and Ben – was one of the most talented climbers of the age. Bachar was also one of the only climbers to follow a special training plan. On his return to the UK, Jerry met with his friend Ben and, inspired by Bachar's creative ways of training, they set about finding a more effective way for climbers to train during

the UK's wet and cold winters. They came up with the idea of a homemade wooden wall, which they mounted in Ben's basement. The wall was so rudimentary and the room it was mounted in was so low that you could barely stand up while using it.

THE SCHOOL ROOM

Things changed in the early 1990s when Ben rented a room in an old Victorian school in Sheffield. The now legendary School Room opened the door to bigger and better training boards. In 1997, Ben started a company called S7, so named after the postal code of a district in Sheffield where a lot of strong climbers lived. S7 focused mainly on training equipment and was one of the first climbing brands to produce a crash pad. The company also launched a very simple yet effective wooden fingerboard that could be mounted on a door frame to allow climbers to train from the comfort of their own home.

A few years later, S7 was sold to the American company Pusher and was later dissolved. Ben then founded a new company called Moon Climbing in 2002. "In 2005, a friend of mine

suggested building a standardized fixed hold board based on our original School Room boards that could be replicated all over the world. And so the MoonBoard was born," Ben remembers. But the original idea behind the MoonBoard dates back much further. In the 1980s, Ben and his friends in Sheffield believed that training boards were the most effective tool for improving basic finger strength and it was this that helped shape the MoonBoard. As Ben explains, "The MoonBoard and its holds were inspired by the original 50° board at The School Room. Most of the holds on this board were small and crimpy – and that's what we wanted for the MoonBoard!"

A UNIQUE TRAINING BOARD

Climbing on the MoonBoard is a unique experience. It's the only board on the market that uses a mixture of wood and plastic holds, and the abundance of crimps means that you won't encounter many jugs. This is because the MoonBoard was "originally designed as a training tool for climbers who wanted to climb hard outdoors and to push their redpoint and boulder grades on real rock. It wasn't really designed with beginners in mind."

THE MOONBOARD AT A GLANCE

First ever: The School Room, Sheffield, UK, 2006

First commercial: 2008

Team size: 10

Layouts: Mini & Standard

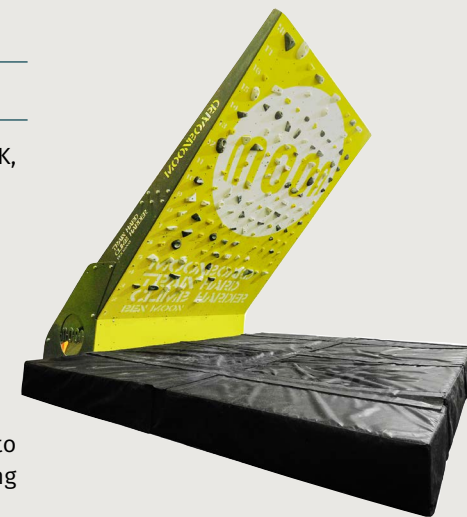
Number of holds on the board: 198

Size of the board:

Mini: 8' x 8' (2.4 x 2.4 m)

Standard: 8' x 12' (2.4 x 3.6 m)

Price range: €1,000 (approx. \$999) to €14,000 (approx. \$13,990) (Freestanding MoonBoard + MoonBoard Pad System)



"The first MoonBoard set-up only had 40 holds, so the number of problems you could climb on a single configuration was pretty limited!" says Ben. Nevertheless, the MoonBoard revolutionized climbing training. "There were no other training boards at this time and it was still a very niche market." With no app or LED technology, adding new problems was rather time-consuming. "To view problems, you had to print off individual PDFs and keep a folder by your board. It wasn't a very user-friendly system so you had to be pretty motivated to train!" As technology advanced, Moon Climbing faced the fresh challenge of developing a way for users to add and share problems. This was originally done on the MoonBoard website, but today users are connected by the MoonBoard app.

BUILD YOUR OWN WALL

Today, the MoonBoard is the most widespread training board on the planet. Of course, this is partly down to the massive growth of climbing, both indoors and outdoors, as well as an explosion in commercial climbing gyms. But if you take a closer look, other factors also contributed to the MoonBoard's success. As Ben describes, "The MoonBoard owes much of its success to the fact that lots of people actually prefer building a simple home training board instead of training in a climbing gym. The MoonBoard isn't all that expensive and gives you access to over 50,000 problems



from 6a+ to 8b+ (V0 to V14) and connects you to thousands of users around the world."

Once commercial climbing gyms realized just how popular this type of training board had become, they started including them in their gyms to provide customers with an alternative way of training: "Doing circuits at gyms can be great fun, but it's also nice to have some problems that don't change every six weeks or so and that you can work on for months or even years."

MOONBOARD MASTERS

The great thing about a standardized training board is that you can set and share problems with anyone who has a MoonBoard, no matter where they are in the world. Ben says, "As the popularity of the MoonBoard grew, it seemed a great idea to organize a MoonBoard Masters competition that would take place at the same time in different countries around the world and to stream it live via the internet. It took quite a lot of work to organize, but we had some of the best competition climbers in the world competing in teams of two simultaneously in New York, Sheffield, Barcelona, and Osaka, watched by tens of thousands of people. It was a great success and really showcased what the MoonBoard is all about. Once the competition was over, anyone who had a MoonBoard wherever they were could try the same competition problems, which



was another first." The MoonBoard Masters first took place in 2017.

What does Ben believe the future holds? "I don't think that training boards themselves will change all that much, but I do think that the technology behind the apps that control them is still very much in its early stages of development. Some kind of 'virtual coach' that can analyze how you use the MoonBoard will be the next big thing."



ABOUT THE FOUNDER: Ben Moon is a walking piece of climbing history. In the 1980s, he was instrumental in establishing the discipline of sport climbing. He climbed England's first 8a (Statement of Youth) in 1984 and arguably the first 9a in the world, Hubble (also in England), in 1990. Hubble was graded 8c+ at the time of its first ascent but has been unanimously upgraded by its repeaters. Through his invention of the MoonBoard, Ben once again changed the shape of climbing history. In 2015, 25 years after his ascent of Hubble, Ben climbed Rainshadow, his second 9a. Today, he still climbs three to four times a week and at least one or two of these sessions are on a MoonBoard.



Matt Fultz on the Tension Board

Photo: Michael Rosato

THE TENSION BOARD

BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH WILL ANGLIN, CEO

Every project starts with an idea, a vision that gets the ball rolling. In the case of Tension Climbing, this idea – of making textureless holds – was rather inconspicuous and could be summed up by the phrase “less is more.”

FROM HOLDS TO BOARDS

Training on textureless holds is not everyone's cup of tea. Some climbers argue that, despite feeling like they're squeezing these holds as tightly as possible, they still slip off. But the big advantage of textureless holds is that they save skin and require a more accurate grip. “Unfortunately, holds like this were not available in the US and if you wanted to climb on them, the only option was to make them yourself,” recalls Will Anglin, one of the founders of Tension Climbing. But, as he found out, DIY is easier said than done: “Without access to specialized equipment and training, it isn't feasible for a regular person to begin molding and pouring polyurethane holds. Not only is this material toxic, but it also fails to produce the quality that the industry demands.”

Wood or stone are more natural alternatives to polyurethane and, as Will explains, also open up the hold-making process to lay people: “With a saw, sandpaper, and some patience, anyone can make wooden holds.” That said, Will quickly discovered that cutting a few pieces of scrap wood with the circular saw in your garage is one thing, but producing set after set of climbing holds is quite another. His ambition to produce wooden holds on a larger scale only became achievable when Gabe Adams entered the equation a few years later. Although he wasn't as involved in climbing as Will, Gabe had other talents, including access to CNC machines and the ability to operate them. The final member of Tension Climbing's founding crew to come on board was Ben Spannuth, who wrote the original machining programs for the first batches of holds.

Tension Climbing's next step was to design a small, utilitarian training wall. “Before modern gyms became more widely accessible, climbers wanted a way to stay in shape and improve during the off-season or periods of bad weather,” says Will. But even when gyms started to pop up around the US, training

walls still had their raison d'être. As Will, who became a coach after his comp career ended, puts it: “The amount of space dedicated to training athletes in the gym was (and still is) a source of conflict between gym managers and coaches.” A small, space-saving training wall like the Tension Board was perfectly suited to solve this problem, as it was designed “specifically as a coaching and training tool as opposed to a climbing wall.”

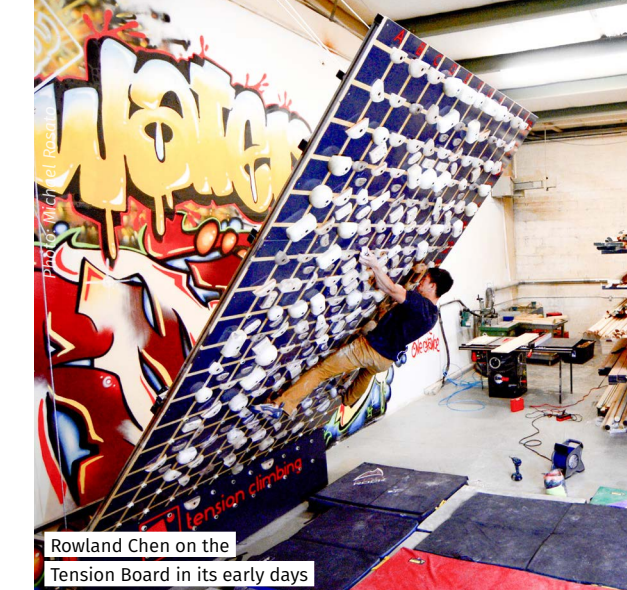
SIMPLICITY IS THE KEY

Designing a symmetrical training wall is quite a challenging task that requires many decisions to be made. Which hold types should be used and where should they be positioned on the board? Which mounting angles are best for each of these holds? “It took a few months, a lot of coffee, and some brutally honest feedback to finalize the current layout,” says Will.

Creativity is the most effective tool during design processes but sometimes too much creativity can be overwhelming or even coun-

TENSION CLIMBING AT A GLANCE

First ever: Tension Climbing Warehouse, Denver, Colorado, USA, 2017
First commercial: Birmingham Boulders, Birmingham, Alabama, USA, 2017
Team size: approx. 10
Layouts: Tension Board 1 & 2
Number of holds on the board: 97 (min) to 303 (max)
Size of the board:
 min 8' x 10' (approx. 2.4 x 3 m)
 max 8' x 12' (approx. 2.4 x 3.7 m)
Price range: €1,200 (approx. \$1,199) to €5,500 (approx. \$5,498)

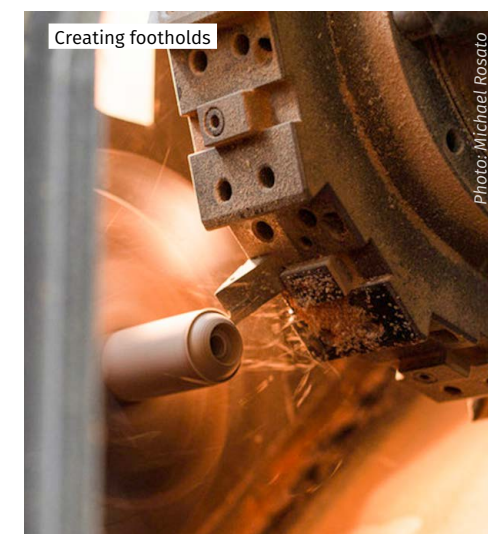


Rowland Chen on the Tension Board in its early days

terproductive. After all, not all ideas are good ideas, so a lot of time must be spent prototyping, testing, and redoing things. According to Will, picking their battles was the most difficult part of designing the Tension Board: “There was a lot we wanted to do, but we couldn't do it all at once.”

These days, the possibilities for shaping holds are virtually endless and even the craziest shapes find their way onto walls. But Tension chose a simpler approach and had a good reason for doing so: “Our shapes are very basic and they only point in one of the eight cardinal directions. The idea behind this is to encourage general adaptations that can then be applied to more complex climbing situations,” Will explains.

For Will, a board like the Tension Board marks a specific point on what he calls “the spectrum of training” for climbing. “At one end of the spectrum, we can distill climbing down to its simplest caricature, the hangboard. Add a little more detail and we get the campus board. Add even more detail and we get the system board as developed by the Huber brothers. The Tension Board continues to build off that same process. As you pass the Tension Board and add more complexity, you arrive at the other boards on the market, followed by spray walls, and then modern climbing gyms at the opposite end of the spectrum.”



Creating footholds

Photo: Michael Rosato



Zach machining

Photo: Will Anglin

HYPE OR TREND?

Many modern gyms have specific training areas besides their lead and bouldering walls. “System walls are becoming increasingly widespread, generally because the popularity of climbing is growing at a more rapid pace than ever before. Another recent trend is the integration of social technology, which is facilitating more community interactions than were previously possible.” And, as Will describes, these interactions are no longer limited to public gyms, but can also be enjoyed by climbers on their home walls: “As well as providing a physical platform to climb on, these walls connect climbers.” For now at least, this is a trend that seems to have really taken off.

When asked what he's most proud of when looking back at the development of Tension Climbing, Will answers enthusiastically and without hesitation: “I'm most proud of the fact that Tension Climbing exists. We didn't start with investment money and we were a complete newcomer to the industry. I feel like we are the underdog. It's a true passion project for everyone involved and we have an incredible team.”

A new Tension Board is soon to be released and will likely go on sale in October or November of 2022. The board will be a mixture of

wood and plastic, and will support wall sizes up to 12ft x 12ft. It will have two layouts, using the same holds. One layout will be symmetrical and the other asymmetrical, similar to a classic spray wall. Every hold is new, there are 146 unique shapes, and the lighting system is also improved.



Photo: Rowland Chen

ABOUT THE FOUNDERS: Tension Climbing was founded by Will Anglin, Ben Spannuth, and Gabe Adams in 2015. Will competed as a young athlete and then for a short time as an adult until carpal tunnel syndrome on both hands forced him to change gears. As president of Tension Climbing, Will is currently most involved in product design, branding, and the management of day-to-day operations. “I don't like to categorize myself as a climber necessarily, but I've spent most of my life exploring climbing and trying to understand as much as I can.”

Ben has spent most of his time at the crags and has been a top-notch sport climber for many years. Gabe, a climber since the late 90s, played a major role in getting Tension off the ground by providing business experience and access to machinery and work space through his globally-recognized automotive racing business, Bluewater Performance.



THE KILTER BOARD

BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH JACKIE HUEFTLE

Photo: Alton Richardson

◆ **Kilter Grips is no ordinary climbing grip company. Its founders, Jackie Hueftle and Ian Powell, can look back on over 50 years of accumulated climbing experience and, with their Kilter Board, have successfully launched a training board that offers something completely new.**

SEIZING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

In 2010, the climbing hold industry had seen better days, but, as Jackie Hueftle recalls, “for many brands, this was a chance to refresh themselves.” After all, crises often bring new opportunities – and the founders of Kilter Grips were ready to seize them.

At this time, Ian Powell, a former competition climber and route setter, already had a few years of hold-making experience under his belt. After selling his company, eGrips, he had turned his back on the industry for a while until he felt the itch to shape again and started to carve holds behind one of the walls at The Spot, a famous bouldering gym in Boulder, Colorado. By coincidence, Jackie was the head setter at The Spot so used her knowl-

edge of the state of the industry to comment on Ian’s shapes. Before long, she also started to help him sell them. “Since then, we continued to grow and evolve,” she says.

At first, Kilter Grips focused solely on making holds. This changed when Peter Michaux, a long-time climbing partner and friend, reached out to Jackie and Ian to discuss designing a wall with him. Peter would be responsible for the app and Kilter would design and produce the holds. “We were too busy at first, but after months of him asking, we decided to give the project a try,” Jackie remembers.

The first prototype was an 8 x 12 feet (approx. 2.4 x 3.7 meters) adjustable board built in the Kilter warehouse. It was an instant hit: “As soon as we started climbing on the board, we fell in love with it!” The board was quickly expanded to 12 x 12 feet (3.7 x 3.7 meters), and after a year of testing, the Original Kilter Board saw the light of day. The ability to adjust the angle of the board using a freestanding adjustable frame is a fundamental aspect of the Kilter Board. To make this technically possible, Kilter started to work with Vertical

Solutions and then began experimenting with freestanding adjustable frame designs in partnership with Lemur Design.

ROME WASN’T BUILT IN A DAY

With the MoonBoard already successful in Europe and the US and the Tension Board a hit in the US, the Kilter Board was by no means the first training wall to be launched on the market. However, each of these boards had their own concept and way of working and could therefore coexist without problems: “We knew we wanted to make a new board that checked several boxes that the current market didn’t service,” says Jackie, describing Kilter’s approach. She adds that today, the MoonBoard and Tension Board are seen as good companions to the Kilter Board, since they can be used for a “different style of climbing.”

Perhaps the Kilter Board would have looked different had the MoonBoard and Tension Board not come first. That being said, the best ideas are often born under a little competitive pressure. One of these ideas were illuminable

KILTER BOARD AT A GLANCE

First ever: Kilter Studio, Gunbarrel, Colorado, USA, 2017

First commercial: Longmont Climbing Collective, Longmont, Colorado and Monkey House, Carbondale, Colorado, USA, 2018

Team size: approx. 11

Layouts: Original & Homewall

Number of holds on the board: 140 to 499

Size of the board:

from min 7' x 10' (approx. 2 x 3 m)

to max 12' x 12' (approx. 3.7 x 3.7 m)

Coming soon: 16' x 12' (approx. 5 x 3.7 m)

Price range: €3,491 (approx. \$3,488) to €11,971 (approx. \$11,968) incl. holds & lights; not incl. shipping & import



holds, which lend the Kilter Board its unique, unmistakable appearance. To make this idea marketable required stringent testing in terms of materials, style, quality, strength, and how well the holds light up. The company’s persistence paid off: “We finally found a good style for the hold and a light that lit the board the way we wanted with a nice perimeter light around each hold. We also tested different hold styles by setting our test board and climbing on it, changing it, and climbing on it again.”

During this process, Kilter also sought the opinion of beginners through to V15 climbers. The result was a variety of holds that challenged users and made them stronger, while also being ergonomic and comfortable to climb on. “For us, it was very important that the holds were comfortable enough to be able to climb on them a lot. At the same time, we wanted to provide a variety of challenges for the users and we wanted the board to work well at all the angles it could be set at,” Jackie says.

DESIGN FIRST!

Pricing was one of the biggest challenges facing Kilter’s sales team. The Kilter Board was rather expensive compared with its compet-

itors. This was primarily due to the number and size of holds and the lighting system, because illuminating all of the holds themselves and having them look the way they look is much more expensive than using an LED light system with a small lamp placed below each hold. A concept like this fundamentally changes the technical requirements. “All the components that make our board look good and work well are not cheap,” Jackie says. “We didn’t set out to make an expensive board, but we focused on design first and it costs what it has to cost to get the design just right.”

But how can Kilter justify selling a product that is much more expensive than their competitors’ products? “That’s an easy question to answer. It’s because we know that the product itself is really good and a great asset to gyms. The board looks great and has comfortable holds with lights that are intuitive to follow. It can also be adjusted to any angle to make climbs of all difficulties.” Ultimately, the product’s success proved that Kilter was following the right approach: “Once people had seen the Kilter Board in person or had climbed on it, they seemed to immediately understand its value. Luckily, people seemed to also understand that the price point was necessary to achieve such quality and that it is a good investment for their space.”

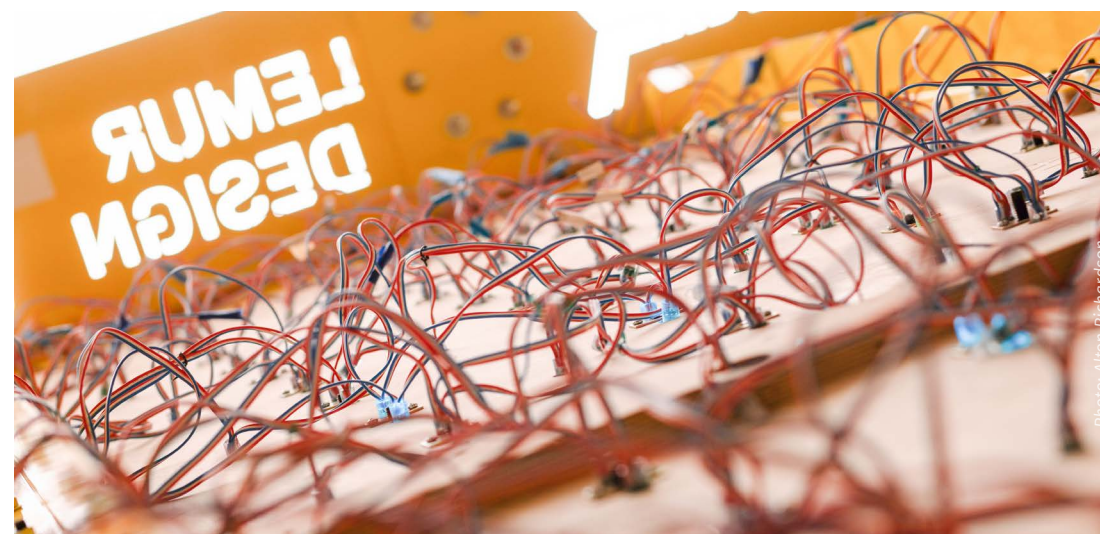


Photo: Alton Richardson

LOOKING AHEAD

Right now, Kilter Grips (together with Urban Plastix, a company acquired by Kilter) offer 6,000 regular holds and macros. In addition, there are over 2,000 light-up holds in the Kilter Board line. There are over 70,000 problems and routes in the app, with new ones being added daily. There’s also a Homewall layout, a “hard board” offering greater average difficulty levels, a fitness board, and some other secret projects in the pipeline.

Jackie is convinced that one board per gym won’t be enough to fulfill the needs of all climbers in the future. That’s why Kilter is working on developing boards that are compatible with each other so that “gyms can plan multiple boards as well as have a section of their gym that is always customizable and connected to larger databases of climbers.” And there is more to come: “Ian is heavily into adjustable boards, gym concepts, and volume design, so we have more of these products coming down the pipeline as well.” We can be curious about what the future will bring. ◆



ABOUT THE FOUNDERS: Ian Powell started climbing in the 1980s and went on to become a competition climber for the US team in the early 1990s. But describing him as a comp climber simply wouldn’t do his skills justice, as besides being an experienced climber, he has also worked as a route setter and an artist, giving him the ideal skill set to become a shaper. After working for hold producer Straight Up, Ian established eGrips, which he sold in 2000 to pursue his art career.

Jackie Hueftle started climbing in 1998 and also has a past in comp climbing. She was a member of the US Junior World Team, but soon realized that she enjoyed setting comps more than competing in them. She has now been a setter for 24 years.

A LOOK INSIDE SINGAPORE'S CLIMBING SCENE

TEXT & INTERVIEWS: MELISSA RUDICK & CODY ROTH

◆ *Singapore, a bustling metropolis and global business hub, is densely packed with climbing gyms. Nearly 40 gyms span across a mere 30 square miles (78 square kilometers), yet you won't find much rock within 200 miles (322 kilometers) of its state limits. Gyms sprouted to the surface in the wake of the Covid pandemic, and more city-goers are picking up indoor climbing by the day. The climbing style is incredibly specific and unique to each facility and its membership. What sort of advantage or disparity is this expansion creating, how can climbing continue to grow in a market that's reaching saturation, and what's it like to live and climb in this environment?*

To find out, we spoke to Jay Koh, Tan Shi Hui, and Qing Xin Cheang, who are each climbing pioneers in their own right. Together, they represent the entire spectrum of climbing in Singapore, from competitive climbing and business ownership to route setting and work as a climbing guide. Having been part of the local climbing scene over the last 25 years, each is able to reflect on the development of climbing in Singapore from their own unique perspective.



Jay at Kinetics Climbing, his gym in Singapore.

Photo: Jay Koh

JAY KOH

FROM CLIMBING PIONEER TO GYM OWNER

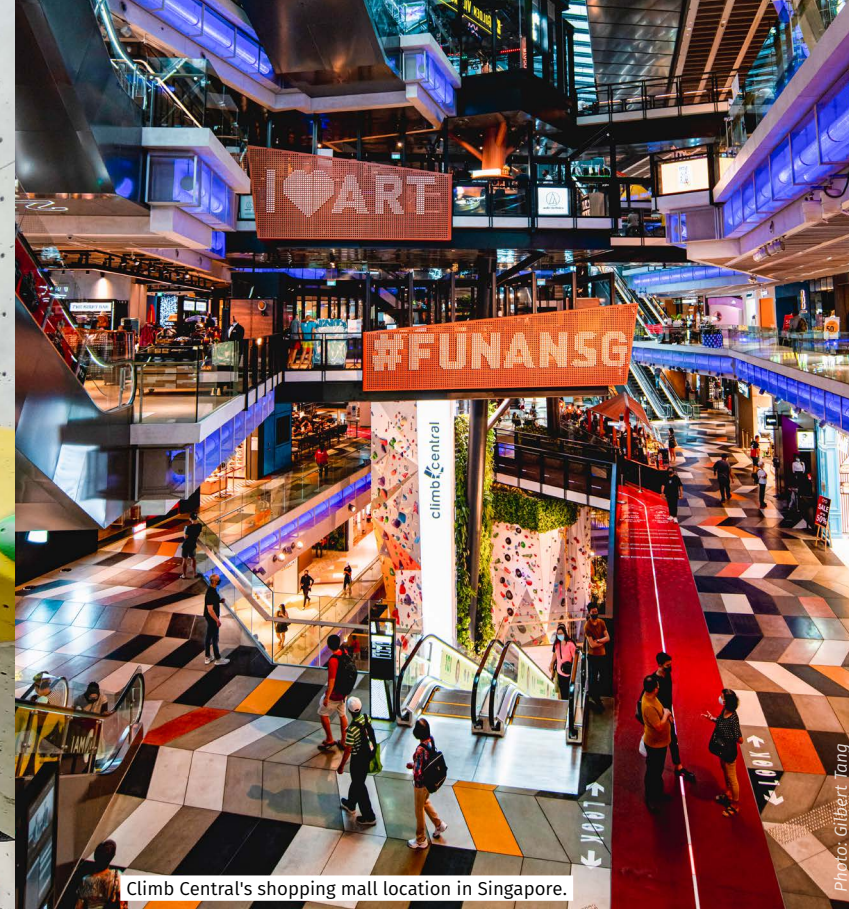
Jay Koh has been involved in nearly every aspect of climbing in Singapore and around Southeast Asia. In 2010, he became the first person in Singapore to lead climb 8c/8c+ (14b/c, Greed in Krabi, Thailand) and one of a select few from Singapore to have bouldered 8b/V13, including Ammagamma in the Grampians National Park, Australia. He competed in his first World Cup in Singapore in 2002, and left the international competitive circuit in 2011. Jay is a founder and co-owner of Kinetics Climbing, a bouldering gym in Singapore that opened in 2011. He was the Singapore national climbing coach in 2012, and then again from 2019 through today, where he uses his expertise to foster the next generation of competitive Singaporean youth climbers.

Jay considers himself to be among the “third generation” of climbers in Singapore; those from the earlier generations that he looked up to – Halil Ngah, Philip Lim, Yam Choon Hian, and Leong Chee Hoi (aka “Spider”) – were among the first Singaporeans to compete internationally and pushed the local standard for climbing on rock and plastic. Among them were the founders of Singapore’s first group of commercial gyms, Climb Asia (now a chain of gyms called Climb Central), which are located throughout Southeast Asia. The opening of Climb Asia back in 2002 gave Jay another place to train for climbing.

RSM: How did you get into climbing and how are you currently involved in the sport?

Jay: I started climbing in 1997 at the age of 17. I began on plastic, and my first experience outdoors was in Krabi, Thailand the following year. I spent four days there and never looked back. It was awesome. Then I went to university, where I received a Bachelors in Engineering. During my studies, I had a lot of free time and very little money. I spent much of this time in Krabi, learning about weather conditions and improving my climbing. I picked up a lot from watching others climb, watching videos, and working on hard climbs. I got to meet people from all over the world. My introduction to climbing was very different from that of much of the current generation of climbers who often get started in bouldering centers nowadays.

I was in the military for nearly five years until 2010, when I quit and spent two months in Rocklands, South Africa. Up until that point, I had primarily been a sport climber, and after 12 or 13 years of climbing, this was my first legitimate bouldering trip. It was eye-opening because in lead climbing, you clock a lot of mileage, whereas in bouldering, you actually do very little climbing. It’s more about the quality of climbing rather than the quantity. I followed that up with a trip to Chironico, Switzerland, another mecca for bouldering, in the winter of 2012.



Climb Central's shopping mall location in Singapore.

Photo: Gilbert Tang

After that, I thought I’d come back home and start a gym so that I could do something that I actually wanted to do. Today, I co-own and help manage Kinetics Climbing. It’s one of the smallest gyms around at just 2,000 square feet (186 square meters). The largest gyms in Singapore are around 5,000 to 20,000 square feet (465 to 1,858 square meters) and are dedicated solely to bouldering.

When we first started Kinetics Climbing, there were no other commercial bouldering gyms in Singapore besides Climb Asia. The style of having pre-set routes on the walls didn’t exist. Instead, most walls were just spray walls, especially for bouldering. Back then, we used tape to demarcate routes, using holds of all colors, and gradually over the years we changed to monochromatic setting. The gym scene was really small at that time compared to Europe, but it has really blown up in the last two years, especially because of the Olympics.

RSM: It seems like climbing might not be the most obvious sport to get into in Singapore. After all, there isn’t a lot of rock and the weather conditions are challenging. How do people typically start climbing?

Jay: During the latter part of the lockdown when all the restrictions made it impossible to travel, people were finding new things to do, and climbing was something they could easily pick up. When fitness and climbing gyms were allowed to open again, there was a government regulation that kept visits to a maximum of two hours. This is actually very little time for an experienced climber, but is quite adequate for beginners and newcomers. So the limited time during which people were allowed to climb in a gym opened up more opportunities for new people to come in and climb.

A lot of people see climbing as a social activity or use it as a way to keep fit. Not many people climb outdoors. That’s just how the sport is developing. But I know there are plenty of people who are curious to try climbing outside. Many newer climbers travel up to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia on the weekends to climb outdoors at Batu Caves, which is about 45 minutes by plane or three to four hours by car.

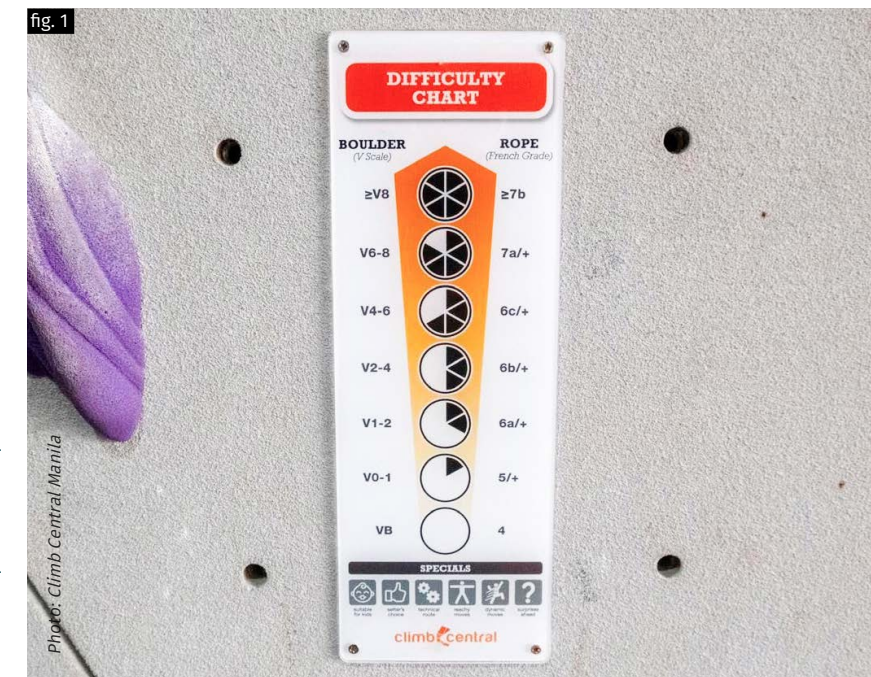
RSM: What challenges do people who live in Singapore face when climbing outdoors?

Jay: There are quite a few climbers in Singapore who are able to climb an 8b/V13 within one session indoors, but I’m not sure if they would have the technical ability or experience to do the same outdoors. Plus, the modern climbing style is so different right now; it’s all about open hands, pinches, and mantles. There is very little modern-style climbing,

“...THE PUBLICITY GENERATED FROM TOKYO 2020 (OLYMPICS) HELPED TO RAISE CLIMBING’S PROFILE SIGNIFICANTLY.”

let alone parkour-like movements, on rock. When indoor climbers go outside, many get a rude shock. Also, a lot of climbers aren’t familiar with the intricate relationship between weather conditions and climbing, so they might go to bouldering areas in the wrong seasons. It’s a very steep learning process that everyone has to go through, and many just don’t want to go through the suffering involved.

If you want to climb outside, you have to travel to Malaysia or Thailand, or even further destinations like Australia. And since we don’t have four seasons in Southeast Asia, you have to get used to the heat, humidity, and mosquitoes.



RSM: What makes the indoor climbing scene in Singapore unique from the rest of the world?

Jay: We’re really set apart by our grading systems. Most gym owners in Singapore find that the commonly used V scale and Font scale start at too high a difficulty, so they try to make things a little bit more approachable for everyone, make it easier to pick things up and progress. This means that a lot of gyms create their own grading systems. A few gyms use a pie scale (fig. 1), and others use a numbering system. Take a numbering system from 1 to 12, for example. The numbers ranging 1 to 5 might be easier than a V0, while the higher end of the scale



Lead comp in 2009 organised by Govt club house

– grades 10 to 12 – might only be as difficult as a V7 or V8 (7b or 7b+). You have to climb regularly at the various gyms in order to understand the conversion. Every new gym you go to might bring a new discovery.

Perhaps another reason why custom grading is popular is that many local setters aren't in the habit of going outside to climb, or they don't climb outside of Singapore regularly, so they don't have the experience or understanding of what the true, standard grades actually feel like.

RSM: You're the coach for the Singapore national climbing team. What does the future look like for kids coming up as climbers?

Jay: The future for young competitive climbers is looking a lot better, especially as of this year. Local gyms and schools are starting to hold competitions again after a two-year break, and many of these are catered to a younger age group of kids below 12. This is great because, in the past, the majority have been for ages 12 and up. But only about half the schools that have climbing or bouldering walls have a dedicated climbing team. Most might just have climbing as an enrichment activity, along with cycling, canoeing, and kayaking, so there's not a lot of focus on climbing. The various comp organizers are trying to hold inter-school competitions among different age groups, ranging from age 8 to 18, endorsed by the Singapore Sport Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (SSCMF).

RSM: Singapore has hosted several major events, including the UIAA World Cup in 2002 and 2006, the IFSC Asian Championships in 2011, and the IFSC World Youth Championships in 2012. Why do you think Singapore hasn't hosted more international events since 2012 and why isn't there a facility dedicated to training for such events?

Jay: Covid can be blamed from 2020 onwards, but before that, one reason might be budget constraints. Hosting an international event is costly and it is difficult to find suitable locations.

As for the lack of facilities dedicated to training for such events, well, sport climbing wasn't considered a mainstream sport in Singapore before the Tokyo Olympics. But the publicity generated from Tokyo 2020 helped to raise climbing's profile significantly. It created more awareness of the sport, which ultimately resulted in more funding to build a facility specifically for performance athletes.

The National Youth Sport Institute (NYSI) has supported the SSCMF by building a small national training center with a lead wall measuring 6 meters (20 feet) wide and about 15 to 17 meters (49 to 56 feet) high (similar to the World Cup size and angles) and two speed lanes. This center should be ready by October of this year, just in time for our National Championships in November 2022! The only problem is that it's outdoors, which isn't ideal given Singapore's hot and rainy weather. We don't have many lead walls in Singapore because it's so hard to find an indoor space that's tall enough and air-conditioned. At least it's a start, and hopefully the new training center will help to bridge the gap between our standards and the current competitive world standards.

RSM: How is industry growth looking at present?

Jay: Before Covid (early 2020), there were around 15 climbing gyms, but during the two-plus years since, that number has increased to around 40 gyms! Despite a couple of lockdowns where gyms had to close and we had to stay at home with very few exceptions, many new gyms were built and many existing gyms expanded during this time. Around 95% of the new builds are bouldering gyms because they're just easier to set up in Singapore. Although many businesses were issued remuneration by the government to help see them through the periods of forced closures, some didn't make it – especially many restaurants – and ended up closing permanently, opening up real estate for more bouldering gyms. We might have maxed out the number of gyms we can successfully have. The market just isn't big enough and I think it grew too fast.

In ten years, the cost of a gym day pass has gone up from around nine Singapore dollars (SGD) (USD 6.30/EUR 6.50) to approximately SGD 19.00 to SGD 30.00 (USD 13.30 to USD 21.00/EUR 13.70 to EUR 21.65).



SEA (South East Asian) Games 2011 in Indonesia

RSM: Singapore is an international city and global business hub. What is it like to live there?

Jay: It's a big city, it's efficient, and everything works. You can get from one end of the city to the other in about 45 minutes if the traffic isn't too bad. Economically priced food is available at our local food centers – which we affectionately call hawker centers – where you'll find all types of cuisine under one roof and you can get a decent (and delicious) meal for around SGD 3.50 to SGD 6 (USD 2.45 to USD 4.20/EUR 2.50 to EUR 4.30).

RSM: Are there any aspects of climbing in Singapore you'd like to see develop?

Jay: I'd like sport climbing to be picked up by more kids from three years old onwards, akin to swimming and gymnastics in Singapore. Now that more government funding has been allocated to this sport on a performance level, I'd like to eventually see it recognized as a mainstream sport, with many more people pursuing this really fun activity.

My personal wish is for an indoor national training center comparable in size to what our neighbors have. All of this in the near future, of course! 💎



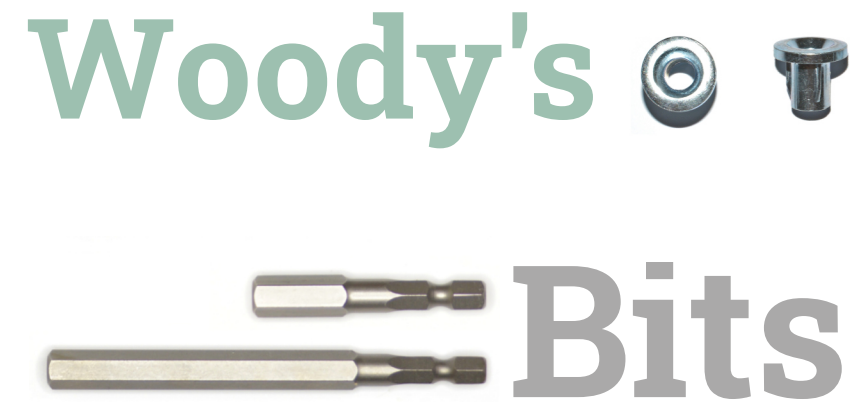
JAY KOH

Born: 1980

Lives in: Singapore

Favorite place to climb: Every place I have been to so far has its own uniqueness and special place in my heart. However, I would really like to go back to Chironico for bouldering and Catalonia for lead!

Above: sending the Mandala (V11/12) at the Buttermilks, Bishop, California



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Setting boulders at Lighthouse Climbing.



Photo: Shae Yue

TAN SHI HUI (SHI)

MOVING UP THE LADDER

◆ **Tan Shi Hui (Shi)** began climbing at school at age 17. She worked as an intern at a climbing gym before eventually beginning coaching, wall building, competing, and route setting. This set her on a course towards becoming a full-time route setter and, later, a gym owner. Although Shi lives in the bustling city of Singapore, outdoor climbing plays an important role in her life. In 2018, she became the first female in Singapore to climb an 8b/13d (*A Pig in the Roof*, Leonidio, Greece).

Shi owns and runs Lighthouse Climbing together with her partner, Cheryl, a national Muay Thai athlete and now climber. Lighthouse opened in the height of the Covid pandemic, leading them to call it their “Covid baby.” Shi is familiar with the challenges of opening a modern climbing gym in a time of rapid growth, and also the rewards of living and working in a community of climbers who have grown up climbing together.

RSM: How did you get into climbing and eventually route setting?

Shi: I started out in a climbing club at school in around 2009. I remember how we used to strip and spam the whole wall with a mixture of holds and make up the climbs ourselves by pointing at holds and trying each other’s routes. While studying business in college, I did an internship at a climbing gym in retail and I started working birthday parties for extra cash. Later, the gym managers asked me to do some coaching, and I eventually started route setting every once in a while.

I managed to persuade them to give me a chance to try wall building for competitions. That was easier said than done because the guys weren’t sure whether I’d be able to carry the wood and metal beams, so I had to ask them very nicely for a try. It was a great experience and meant that, later on, when we were building the Lighthouse, we did all the work ourselves together with only one guy who came from CityWall and some local workers. After leaving the gym where I was interning, I jumped into route setting full time, setting for Climb Central and Onsite when it was still around. I dabbled in every part of the gym before opening my own.

“I WANT TO CREATE CLIMBS THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE AND THAT TEACH NON-CLIMBERS AND NEWER CLIMBERS HOW TO MOVE THEIR BODIES.”

RSM: Can you tell us a little bit about what it’s like to own and operate a gym in Singapore?

Shi: The whole gym scene has changed quite a bit. Our gym, Lighthouse Climbing, was the first gym to open its doors after Covid started, and right after that, at least four more gyms opened up. You can travel from one end of the island to the other by car in less than an hour and you can ride a bike around the whole island in just eight hours. Some gyms are just a stone’s throw away from each other. But we’re all friends and we have watched each other grow up, so it’s hard to have bad blood.

One big challenge as a gym owner and setter is dealing with the shipping costs for materials, specifically holds and volumes. It’s a lot of extra money to throw away, which is frustrating. We spend approximately USD 3,000 (EUR 3,100) on shipping per year, so we have to be mindful of this when buying holds and setting a budget. It’s a lot easier for American and European gyms to stock and buy holds, simply due to their location.



The youth team in Hong Kong for a bouldering competition in 2017.

RSM: Can you give us your take on the climbing scene in Singapore? What makes it unique and interesting?

Shi: Singapore is so large and the density of climbing gyms is so high that, even if we wanted to, we couldn’t visit every single gym in one month. Climbers in Singapore aren’t ashamed of logging their climbing, taking videos, and posting their climbing videos on social media. Most climbers have a normal Instagram account and then a climbing account as well. I have three: my normal account, then one for Kilter Board, and then another one for my setting to force myself to put my work out there.

RSM: How has route setting grown and developed over the years you’ve been involved in it – for both you and for Singapore in general?

Shi: In 2012, we didn’t have proper route setting standards in place. Later, in 2016, the Climb Central route setting team went to the Climbing Wall Association (CWA) Summit in the US for a workshop and

brought back a whole new (safety) system with static lines, rigs, micro traxion, and helmets, etc. That changed a lot in terms of technical setting in Singapore. It also made my life a whole lot easier when it came to setting efficiency and it was less taxing for the body as well. It took a while for us to get used to the change; wearing helmets seemed like extra weight. That is, until we had minor accidents of dropping footholds.

A route setter’s salary in Singapore is still not as high as in the US or Europe. Before I opened Lighthouse, when there were fewer gyms, I didn’t think I could make a living as a route setter alone. Now there are a lot of freelance setters who jump around from gym to gym, setting four days a week. There are a lot more work opportunities for setters.

Back in 2015-2016, we had ten setters and three main gyms, and now there are 30+ gyms and still a limited number of route setters, so setters have become a lot more valuable, especially if you want your routes to stand out. There’s definitely interest among local climbers to become route setters, because the setter workshops are always full.



Shi on Hand me the Canteen, Boy in Rifle, Colorado.

climbing in Greece while watching a Petzl RocTrip video. That was it! I was hooked on Greece.

I was lucky enough to have good support from Climb Central at the time. They were my sponsor and I was also route setting for them. Whenever I had a big project, I would come back and train specifically for it. When I was working on Tufadango (8a+), a route full of crimps, good rests, and a dyno in the middle, I had the opportunity to set an endurance problem that almost replicated the moves, so I would train my endurance before heading back to it. A Pig in the Roof (8b) was a roffy problem and the individual moves weren't too hard for me. Instead, it required pure power endurance, so that's what I would focus on before returning to it.

RSM: In addition to climbing outdoors, route setting, and running your gym, you're also competing?

Shi: Yes! I used to compete with Temasek Polytechnic, where I studied and climbed day in, day out. I miss competing with a school team, but I am happy to be able to relive that as part of the Singapore national team.

Since joining the national team, I've gone to two Boulder World Cups in Utah in the US this year and will be competing in the Lead World Cup in Jakarta, Indonesia, in late September.

RSM: What changes or developments would you like to see in the climbing community and industry in your city?

Shi: Climbing has grown a lot locally, both in terms of the number of gyms and the number of professionals working in the industry. I hope this will pave the way for future climbers and that we might be able to have a Singaporean climbing Olympian! I also want local climbers to venture out and explore climbing outdoors if and when they can because that is where I find the most joy in climbing. ♦



TAN SHI HUI (SHI)

Born: 1992

Lives in: Singapore

Favorite place to climb: Rifle, Colorado, USA

Above: Shi and Cheryl, the founders of Lighthouse Climbing.

As for my own experience, we all shared ideas in my early setting days. We'd see routes online and on Instagram, and we mimicked what we saw and learned from there. I want to create climbs that are accessible and that teach non-climbers and newer climbers how to move their bodies. The placement of holds is so specific that I force a high step or a sit start or start a climb with a heel hook. As I grow as a setter, my ideas kind of fly around everywhere – there's no protocol.

RSM: Congrats on achieving two personal firsts in the last few years when you climbed an 8a+ (13c) and an 8b (13d), both in Leonidio, Greece! How did you prepare for that?

Shi: Thanks! When I got into climbing, I would go to Thailand, just a two-hour flight away, at least once a year. That was until I discovered

Teaching an SPI course with the Colorado Mountain School.



Photo: Rainbow Weinstock

QING XIN CHEANG (QX)
FROM GYM TO CRAG AND BEYOND

♦ Qing Xin Cheang (QX) discovered just how much he loved climbing in its many forms when he left home and traveled the world to climb. When he returned home, he brought back the tools to guide, teach, contribute to, and advocate for climbing in Singapore. He feels a strong connection to the climbing gyms he has frequented in Singapore throughout his life, and gratitude towards the local outdoor climbing pioneers he learned from along the way.

Since 2015, QX and his partner, Kelly, have called Taiwan their home. Together they run a climbing guide service called The Bivy in the vicinity of Long Dong (Dragon's Cave), a unique spot that is becoming more and more popular as a climbing destination. QX is Singapore's first internationally certified climbing guide and the first Singaporean to climb big wall routes on El Capitan and Half Dome in Yosemite, California, USA.

RSM: How did you get into climbing?

QX: I was introduced to climbing in 2002 through the mountaineering troops in the military. I was in special operations for 11 years and was tasked with searching for climbing standards we could adopt and add to the military syllabus so we could be in line with what others were doing. I became an instructor through the then Singapore Mountaineering Federation, which is today the SSCMF, and began teaching courses. I quickly realized that the Federation's standards were not really up to par, so I decided to look elsewhere for inspiration. I went to Tonsai, Thailand for the first time that year and fell in love with outdoor climbing. I later discovered trad climbing in Long Dong, Taiwan

in 2009 and realized that I liked it much more than sport climbing. In 2011, I traveled to Yosemite, California to climb big walls with my partner, Kelly. I wanted to climb the Nose on El Capitan and Half Dome's Regular Northwest Face and knew that I had to put more work in for this to happen. I wanted to do more big wall climbing, so I quit my job, started teaching and guiding, and gained the freedom to travel wherever I wanted to climb.

RSM: Tell us about your path to guiding and stewardship.

QX: After my time in the US, I thought maybe I wanted to come back and do something in Singapore, but I didn't think I was adequately equipped with the knowledge to teach anyone. I heard about the American Mountain Guide Association Single Pitch Instructor (AMGA SPI) course and the guide track program while I was in the US and was immediately sucked into it after taking the entry course in 2018. After teaching some SPI courses in the US, I wanted to bring this newfound knowledge back to Southeast Asia to establish more consistent standards. I managed to bring SPI programs to Taiwan and I try to encourage as many Singaporeans to attend as possible to open their eyes to standards that are more commonly accepted elsewhere.

I've been working informally with the Thailand Climbing Development Association (TCDA), running bolting clinics together and sharing ideas on how our regions can cooperate to introduce common standards. I also work with some guide services in Tonsai, Thailand to re-bolt routes, replace anchors, and generally just make climbing safer for climbers.



Rock climbing improvement workshop at the Dairy Farm

Photo: Lish Wee Teat



Sharing session in Campers' Corner, Singapore

as NParks, to iron out climber liability issues and to find a way to legitimize reopening access to the area.

RSM: What obstacles are there to getting more people outside to climb?

QX: There were around 110,000 climbers in Singapore last I heard, and with so many schools having walls and programs, the actual figure must be higher. I'd say that one-third of the climbers in Singapore are interested in getting outdoors, but it's not all that easy for Singaporeans to go out climbing – not because of the cost, but due to other factors. The cost of travel isn't a problem for most Singaporean

“THERE WERE AROUND 110,000 CLIMBERS IN SINGAPORE LAST I HEARD, AND WITH SO MANY SCHOOLS HAVING WALLS AND PROGRAMS, THE ACTUAL FIGURE MUST BE HIGHER..”

climbers, as we have the highest GDP per capita in the region and can almost be regarded as “the Switzerland of Southeast Asia.” To put it into perspective, traveling to neighboring countries to climb is almost considered cheap compared to staying in Singapore for the weekend. You can easily get to Malaysia, for example, where the accommodation is cheap and you don't even need a car to get to the crags.

The fact is that our only local area – the Dairy Farm – is closed, and also, a lot of climbers think that climbing outdoors is unsafe. The Climbing Federation is doing little to dispel this belief and is not advocating for outdoor climbing or fighting to keep our local area open.

Climbing in Singapore isn't very well regulated, which is kind of ironic because Singapore is such a regulated country. Even chewing gum is banned here. Rock climbing seems to have been forgotten because, in the grander scheme of things, people are more focused on regulating gyms and classes and getting people started than they are on imparting the skills needed to transition to climbing outdoors. I think the idea of climbing mentorship has been lost. You can see that a lot of climbers don't know how to behave or interact with other people at the crag.

RSM: Did you also climb indoors throughout your time in Singapore?

QX: Yes, I climbed almost exclusively in gyms when I was a young climber from 2002 to 2013. Climbing was a relatively niche sport in Singapore when I started out; we had one climbing wall and one bouldering gym at the time. I still climb at gyms when I go back to Singapore.

RSM: Do you cooperate with any local gyms to bring indoor climbers from the gym to the crags?

QX: Recently I've been working with a gym called The Rock School, teaching courses, putting on events, and getting people out to experience the outdoors. I hope to find more collaboration opportunities like this in the future.

RSM: What does your guiding work look like these days?

QX: I mostly guide people who already have some climbing experience, and some beginners as well. Many of the people I guide are seeking to improve their skills and abilities in trad, multi-pitch, or just general outdoor climbing. I guide regionally, mostly Malaysia, Thailand, and Taiwan. Travelers from all over the world want to come to Taiwan to experience our sea cliff sandstone with professional guides.

I'm currently working towards completing the AMGA Alpine Guide track program, and my goal is to finish in the next five years.

RSM: Tell us about Singapore's local crag, the Dairy Farm.

QX: The Dairy Farm is an old quarry with a huge meadow and all this rock, which is very rare for Southeast Asia. We used to have quite a few quarries in Singapore, most of which have been closed and filled with water, but the Dairy Farm remains intact. It's amazing that we have rocks in the middle of the city! The granite is pretty good and the area is rich with the history and culture of Singaporean mountaineering. The walls were first set up by climbers who wanted to climb Everest and needed a way to improve their skills, so they went there to focus on routes. Later, locals started cleaning up the walls and putting up more routes.

Right after we started the RCC, we encountered access issues at the Dairy Farm. The RCC is working with our national park service, known

RSM: What it is about climbing that motivates you to share it with other people?

QX: I feel happy and fulfilled to be part of others' success, and to see the smiles and the looks of awe when they see the view from the top. I enjoy the challenge of teaching and working with different types of people and varying abilities. It's very powerful and teaches me to see things from their lens, and ultimately, helps me to become a better person.

RSM: How would you like to see the Singapore climbing community develop?

QX: I'd like to see a higher standard of instruction, more climbers heading outdoors, a higher rate of mentorship, and climbers acting as stewards in climbing areas where we recreate. 🌱



Photo: Elodie Soracco

Photo: Melissa Rudick

Melissa Rudick has been climbing since 1996. She has a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology and practiced massage therapy and Structural Integration for over 20 years. For a handful of years she was an IRATA 3 Rope Access Supervisor and training manager. Melissa is currently an editor and Project Manager at Vertical-Life.

Cody Roth has been climbing since 1995. He's a former World Cup finalist, nationally certified route setter and IRATA 3 Rope Access Supervisor and instructor. He's done the first ascent of a possible 9a+, placed gear up to 8b+, and at 39, he still gets in a few 8b onsights. Cody is a Sales and Concept Manager at Vertical-Life.

Melissa & Cody live in Arco, Italy with their former street-dog, Frankie.



Photo: Matt Robertson

QX on Espresso Crack, Eastern Sierra, California.

QING XIN CHEANG (QX)

Born: 1982

Lives in: Taiwan

Favorite place to climb: Yosemite Valley, California



Millet © M. Georges



Easy Up Rental

Climbing shoe especially developed for rental business

- Non marking durable 4 points grip sole
- Anti microbial hemp inner fabric
- Odor reducing cotton-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

Photo: Egon Larcher

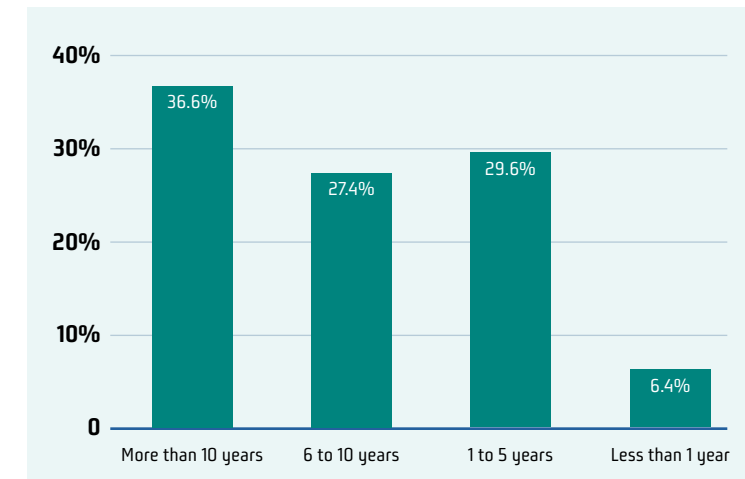
Our survey this year focused on the latest demands and needs of gym managers and route setters. With your help, we've gained a more comprehensive understanding of current and upcoming topics and trends. Read on for the highlights and most thought-provoking findings.

A BREAKDOWN OF THE DEMOGRAPHICS

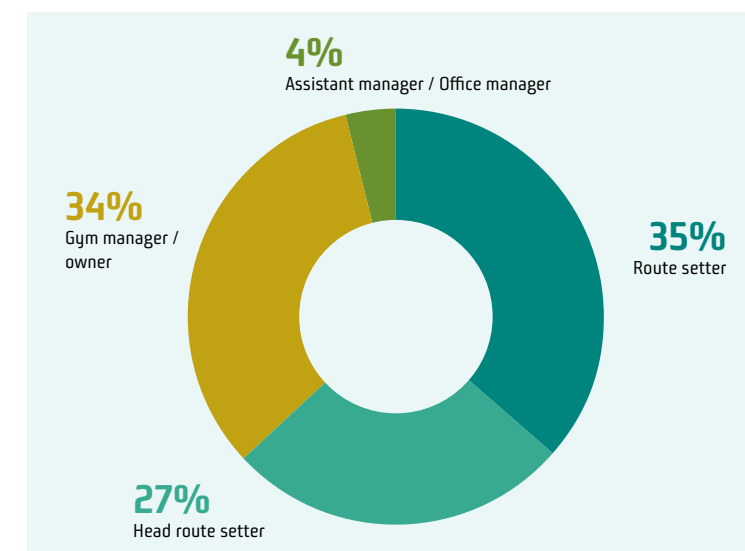
A total of 317 participants (85% men and 14% women) shared their experiences and knowledge with us. More than 36% of the participants have been working in the climbing gym industry for over ten years. The survey addressed climbing gym owners and/or managers (32.2%), route setters (35.3%), and head route setters (25.9%).

The participants work in climbing gyms around the world, with Germany most highly represented just ahead of the United States, followed by Great Britain, Australia, and Switzerland.

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN THE CLIMBING GYM INDUSTRY?



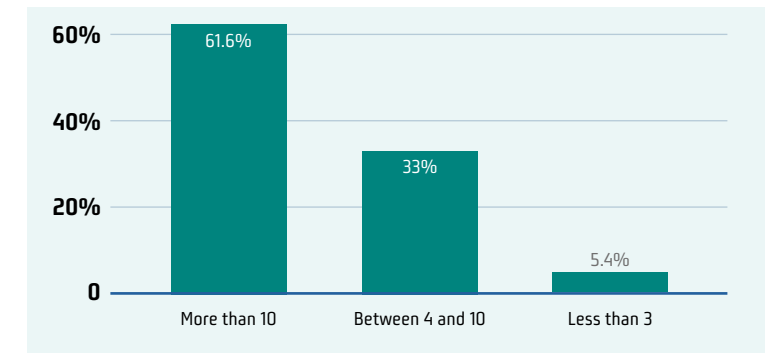
WHAT IS YOUR POSITION AT THE GYM?



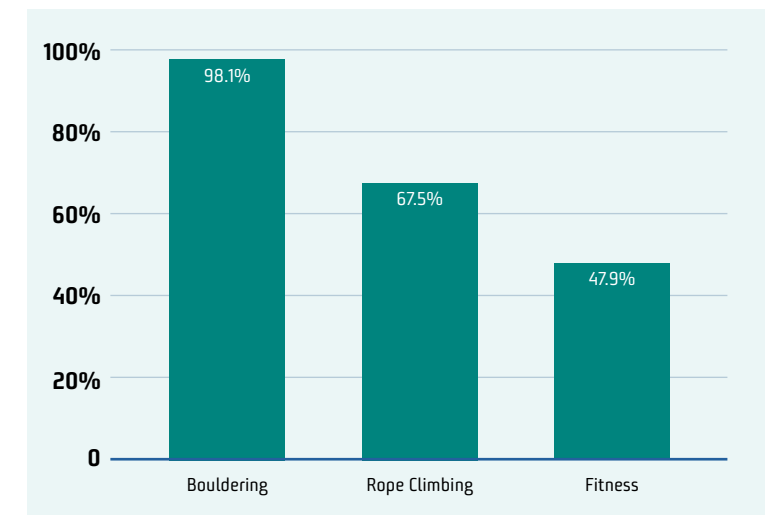
BOULDERING, ROPE CLIMBING, AND FITNESS – IN THAT ORDER

Thanks to its low barrier to entry, for both participants and gym owners, bouldering continues to lead the market. That doesn't mean, however, that rope climbing is in any sort of crisis or decline. Instead, as more of the general climbing population age, the more rope climbing appeals to a greater audience as a lower impact sport that is less likely to cause injuries. Fitness spaces are still more commonly found in US climbing gyms and are somewhat overlooked in other markets, including Europe. Therefore, the number of fitness spaces in the overall market remains low.

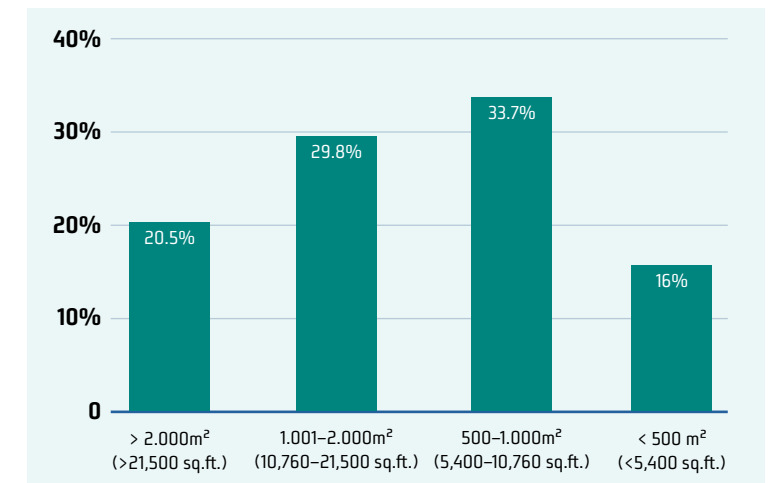
HOW MANY EMPLOYEES DO YOU HAVE AT YOUR GYM?



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DOES YOUR GYM OFFER?



WHAT SIZE (ROUGHLY) IS YOUR CLIMBING GYM IN SQUARE METERS (SQ. FT.)?



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ROUTE SETTER MAGAZINE INTERNATIONAL SURVEY 2022

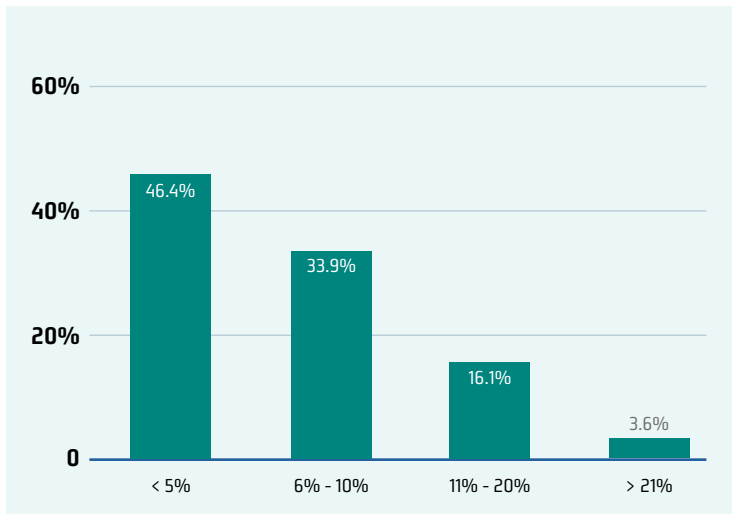
SURVEY CONCEPT & ANALYSIS BY VERTICAL-LIFE

RENTAL GEAR WRAP-UP

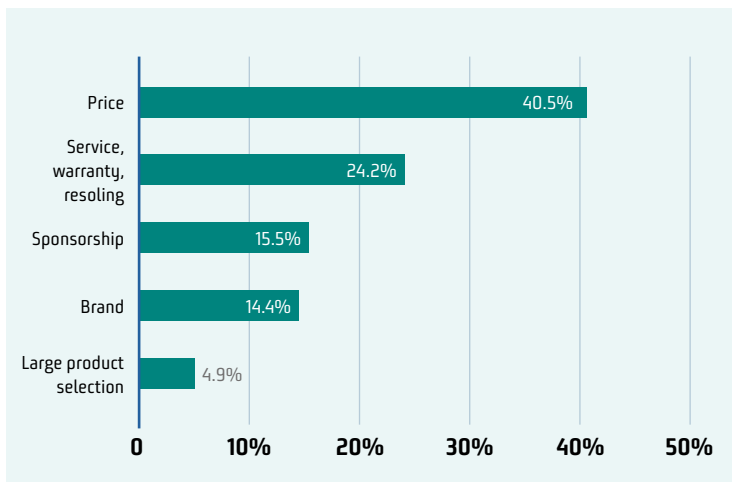
Although gear rental isn't the biggest money-maker in climbing gyms, it is clearly essential for most gyms. When it comes to the most important piece of rental equipment – climbing shoes – there's quite a bit of brand diversity, with La Sportiva and Mad Rock equally accounting for the largest pieces of the shoe pie, followed closely by Evolv and Boreal.

Resoling is another developing topic to keep an eye on. As the industry moves towards being as sustainable as possible, coupled with current global inflation and the difficulty in acquiring raw materials, it's easy to imagine this valuable service growing in importance.

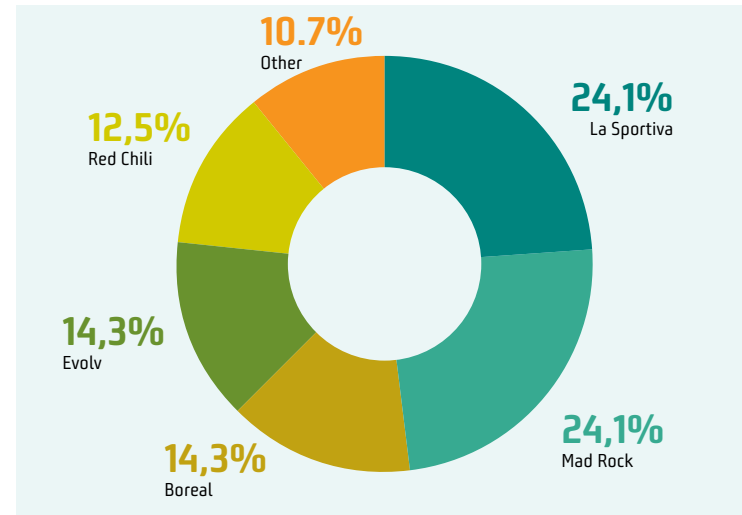
APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR TOTAL CLIMBING GYM TURNOVER DO YOU ATTRIBUTE TO RENTALS?



PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO CONSIDERED THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA TO BE EITHER 'IMPORTANT' OR 'VERY IMPORTANT':



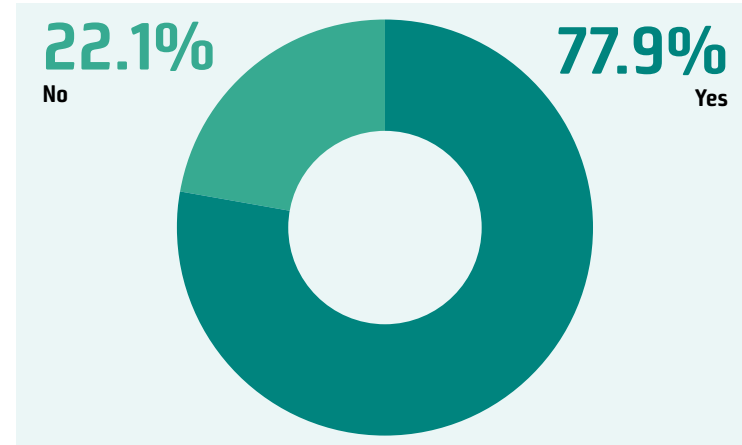
TOP FIVE RENTAL SHOE BRANDS OFFERED AT GYMS:



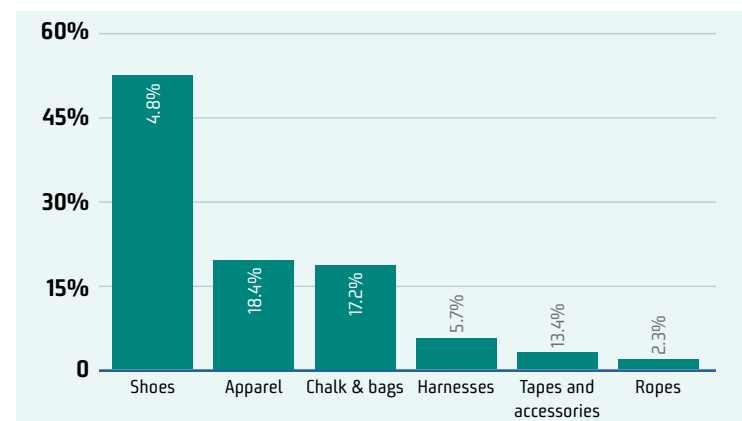
ONSITE PRO SHOPS

The percentage of gyms with onsite pro shops came in higher than expected in the global market (77.8% of respondents). If your gym has yet to open a pro shop and you've been mulling over the idea, this finding should give you all the encouragement you need. While a shop might not significantly increase your facility's overall revenue, your customers will appreciate having their needs considered and will repay you in loyalty.

DO YOU RUN A CLIMBING SHOP AT YOUR GYM?



WHICH ARTICLES DO YOU SELL AT YOUR SHOP?

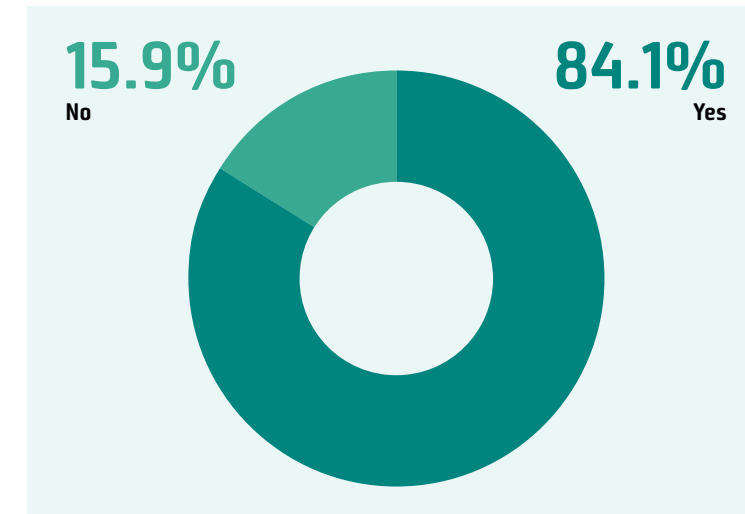


CLIMBING HOLD OUTLOOK

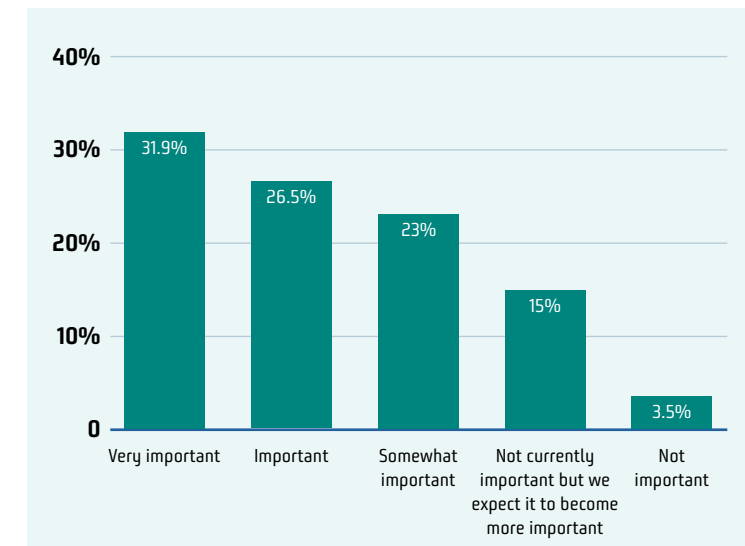
The exponential amount of growth enjoyed by volumes and macros likely won't come as a surprise to regular gym-goers. And if you enjoy this style of climbing, you'll be happy to hear that most gyms report that they still have an appetite for more. It seems safe to say that volumes and macros are here to stay and that gyms still feel like they can add to their walls and backroom stores.

When it comes to climbing hold materials, polyurethane is on the rise and polyester is on the decline. Looking to the future, gyms would like to see brands use more sustainable materials and methods. We expect this topic to gain more momentum year after year, with more innovative solutions coming to the forefront.

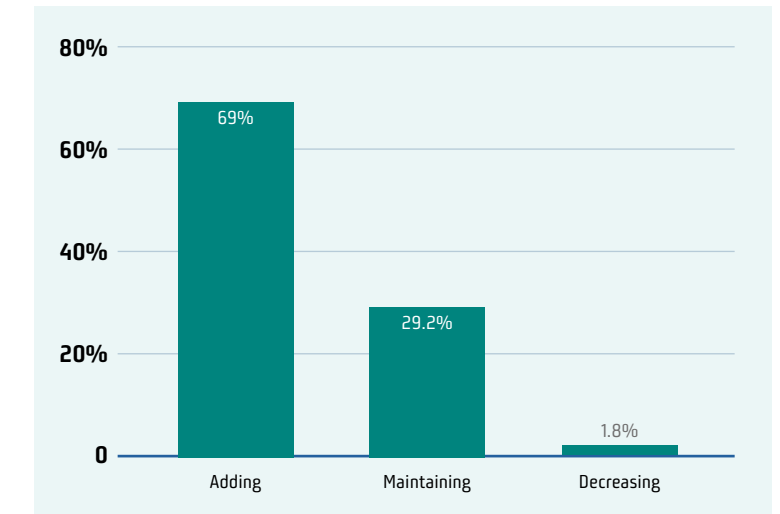
HAVE YOU SIGNIFICANTLY ADDED TO YOUR VOLUME AND MACRO INVENTORY OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS?



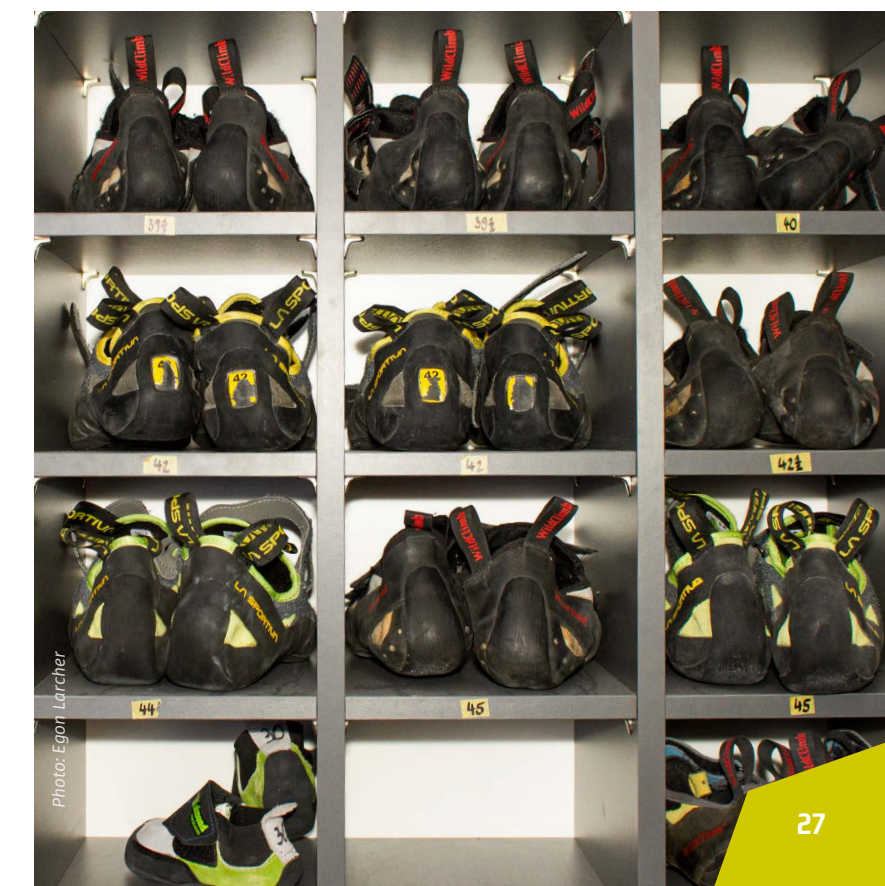
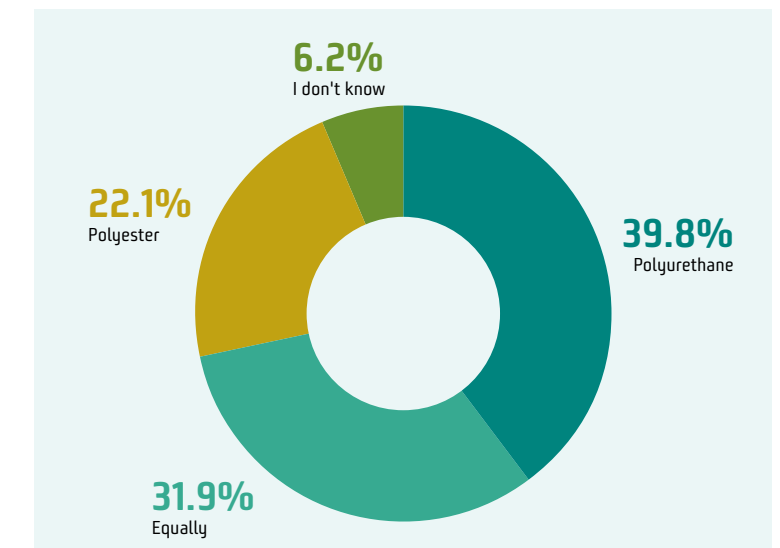
HOW IMPORTANT IS SUSTAINABLE HOLD, MACRO AND VOLUME PRODUCTION FOR YOUR CLIMBING GYM AND YOUR PURCHASING DECISIONS?



REGARDING YOUR VOLUME AND MACRO INVENTORY, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE?



WHICH HOLD MATERIALS DO YOU USE THE MOST?



APRÈS-CLIMBING

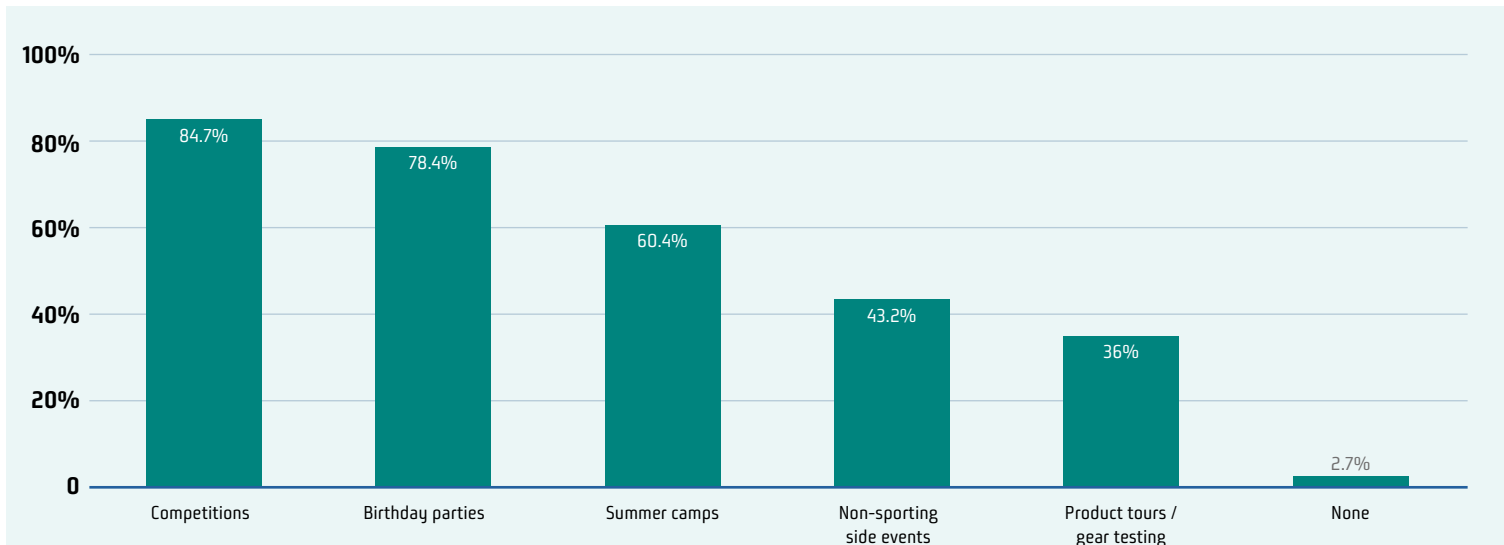
We are continuing to see cafes opening up in gyms around the world. The social side to climbing has been well-documented and arguably gives it an edge over its non-mainstream sport counterparts. Having a cafe to hang out in before and after working out only helps further foster that social aspect and camaraderie.

LOCAL COMPETITIONS ARE ON THE RISE

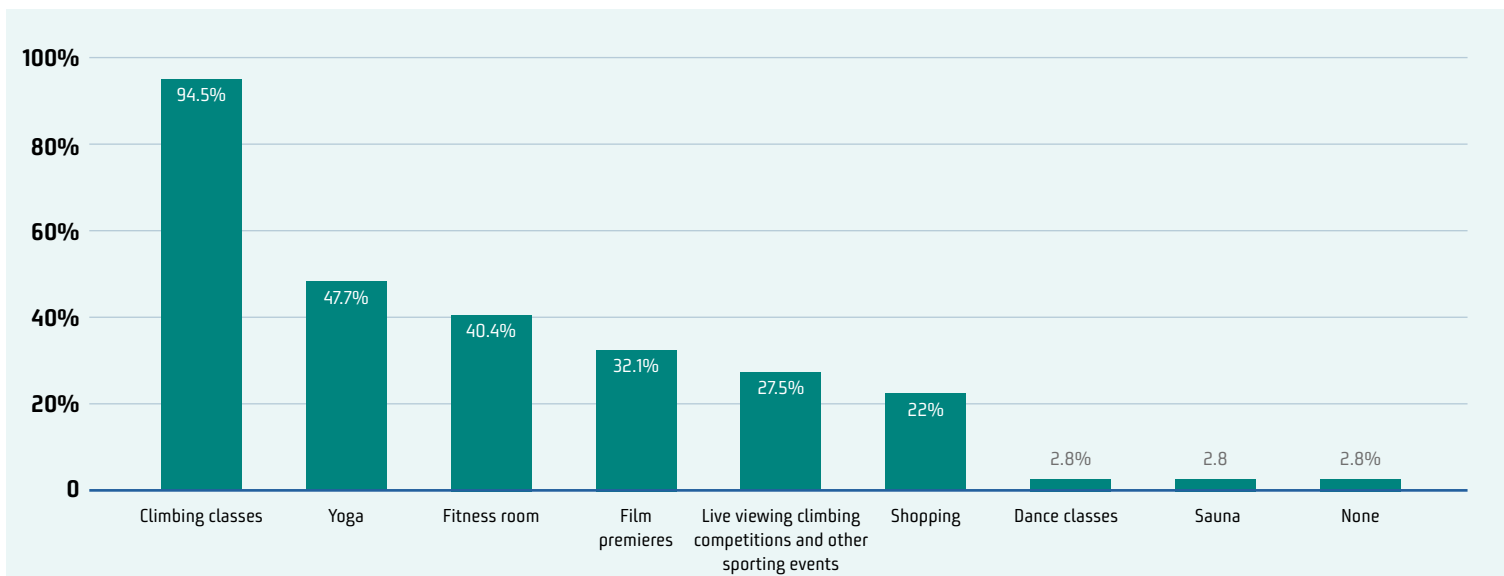
Social activities have become even more valuable post-Covid. Climbing gyms have seen a rise in the demand for recreational competitions. Capacity restrictions have also made gyms rethink how they run competitions. Multi-day events, team contests, and climbing leagues are becoming more commonplace and have helped gyms to keep the good vibes ticking over.

Birthday parties and summer programs continue to be a proven source of extra revenue for gyms. And yoga, competition livestreams, and film premieres all look to be solid bets worth considering.

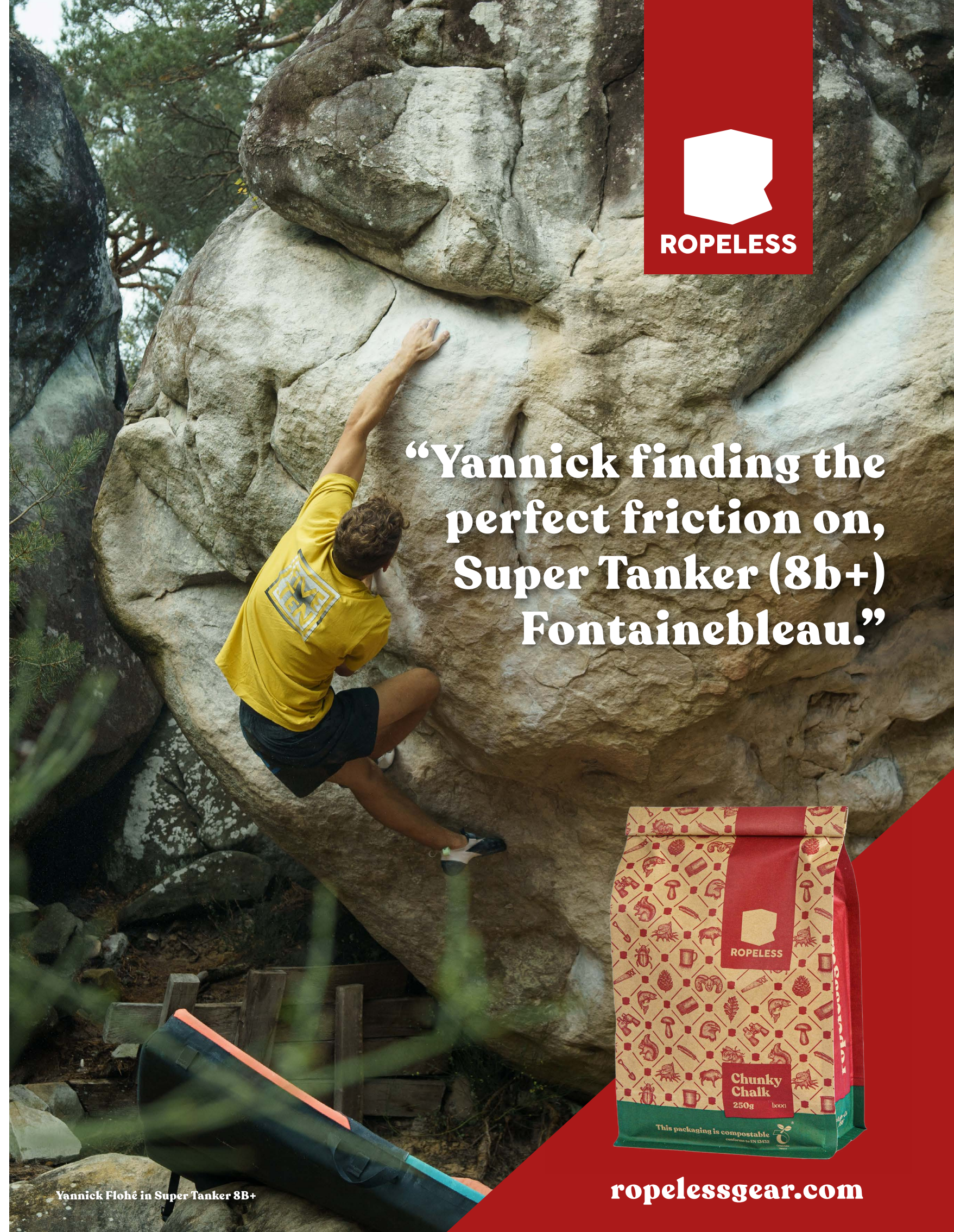
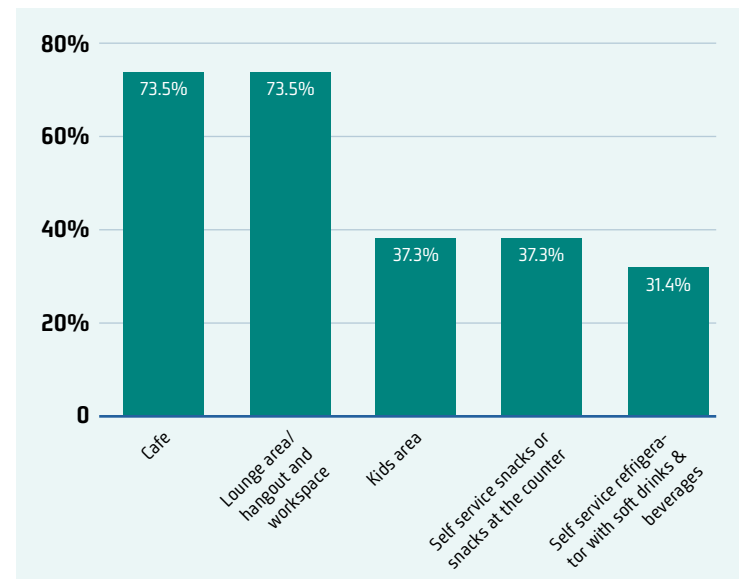
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS DO YOU OFFER AT YOUR CLIMBING GYM?



WHAT ADDITIONAL PROGRAM(S) DO YOU OFFER AT YOUR GYM?



DO YOU HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AMENITIES AT YOUR GYM?



“Yannick finding the perfect friction on, Super Tanker (8b+) Fontainebleau.”



Yannick Flohé in Super Tanker 8B+

ropelessgear.com

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE AUTOBELAY

Yes, we've just finished praising the social aspect of climbing, but that doesn't mean that autobelays and autonomous climbing don't have their place in our sport. As more brands and innovations enter the marketplace, we expect this equipment to become a necessity. When you consider that autobelays are a costly investment requiring constant upkeep and maintenance, the fact that nearly 45% of those surveyed reported having autobelays in their facility becomes all the more impressive.

DO YOU HAVE AUTO BELAYS?

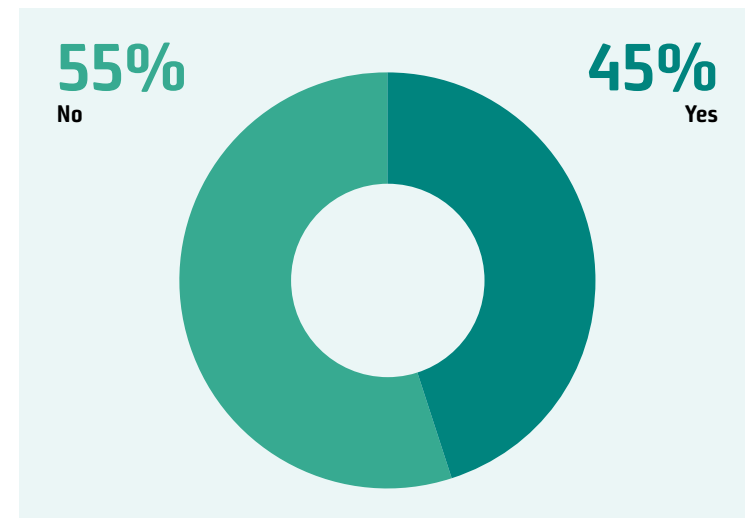


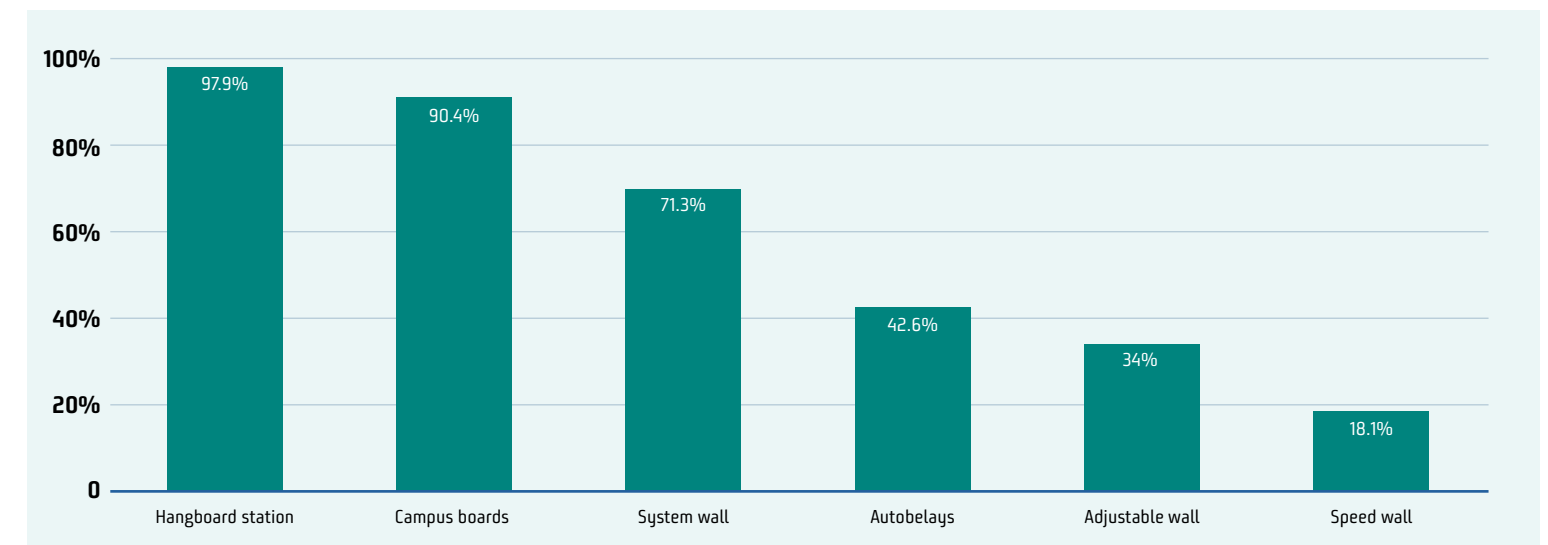
Photo: James Lucas

WALLS AND BOARDS

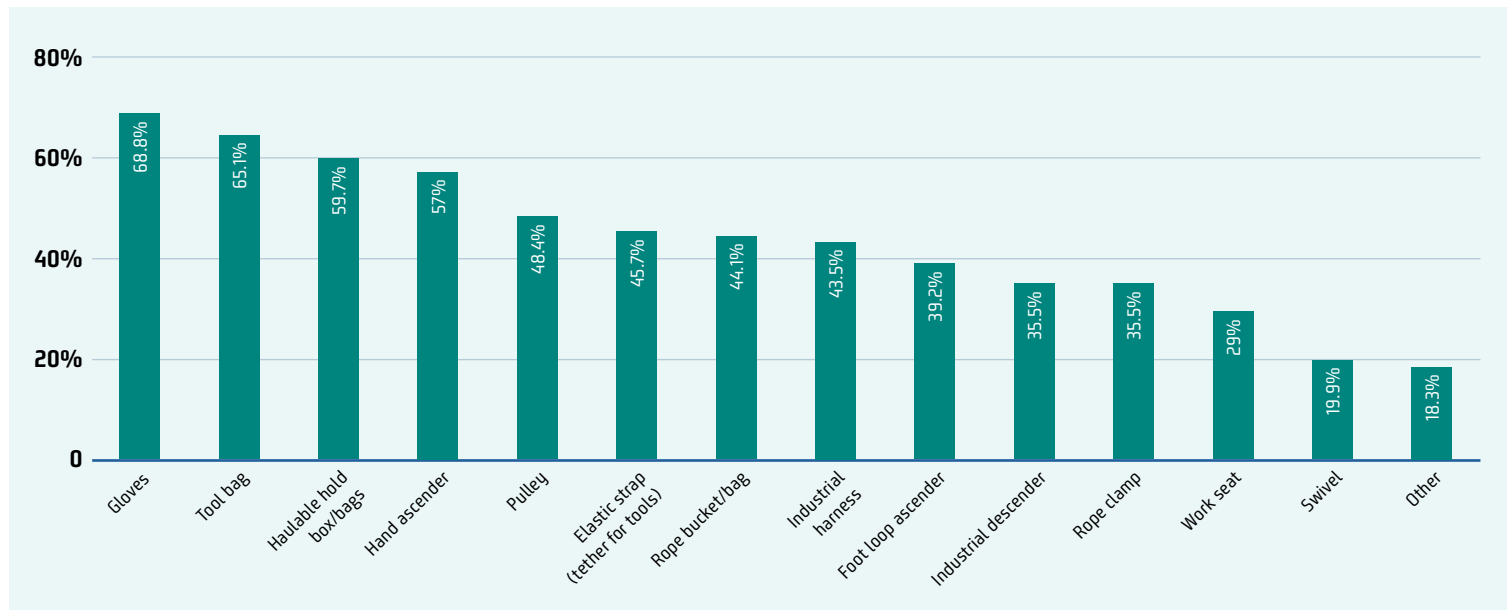
Training and system boards are becoming a mainstay, and it's easy to imagine them being as ubiquitous as hangboards and campus boards. Having a training board with adjustable angles offers more variety and accommodates climbers of various abilities. Demand for this more advanced style of training board is anticipated to grow.

So long as speed climbing is an Olympic discipline, speed walls will have their place, but due to their high cost and space requirements, they are expected to remain more of a novelty.

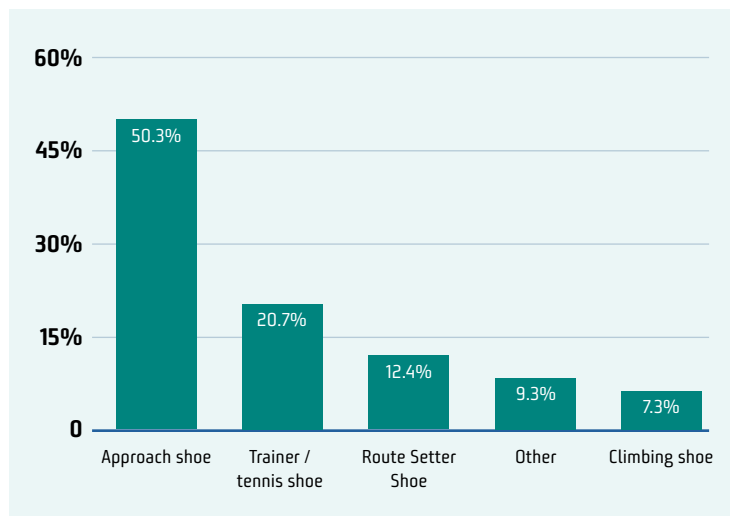
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU OFFER AT YOUR CLIMBING GYM?



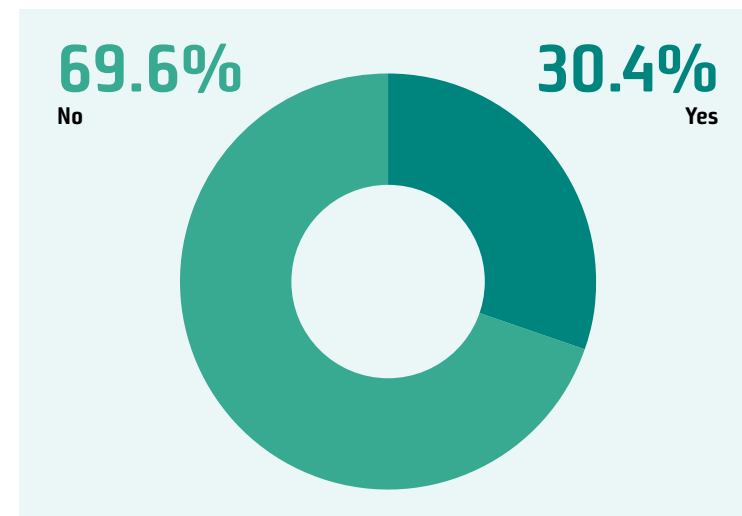
WHICH OF THESE ITEMS OF GEAR DO YOU USE WHEN ROUTE SETTING?



WHAT TYPE OF SHOE DO YOU USE WHILE ROUTE SETTING?



DO YOU USE A HELMET WHILE ROUTE SETTING?



ROUTE SETTING EQUIPMENT ROUND-UP

The equipment used in route setting is becoming more varied, complex, and specialized each year. We therefore expect more and more route setter-specific footwear options to enter the market in the coming years. The adoption of the industrial harness for both comfort and safety is holding steady. Somewhat surprisingly, nearly 70% of the route setters surveyed reported that wearing a helmet is not currently part of their work routine.

SUMMARY

Based on the results of this survey, climbing gyms seem to have more in common than they did in previous years and in the pre-Covid era. For example, in previous years, polyurethane climbing holds were mainly a staple of the North American climbing market and were more of a novelty in Europe, but this has changed, as polyurethane has clearly found a captive audience in Europe and has achieved parity with its

polyester cousins. Volumes and macros, on the other hand, originated in Europe and have caught on globally. There still appears to be an strong appetite for the climbing style facilitated by these features.

North American gyms have long been known for their fitness spaces, yoga classes, and pro shops, but these amenities appear to be gaining solid traction in Europe and elsewhere. The same holds true for autobelays, which also first took off in North America. Onsite cafes, which have their origins in Europe, are also gaining popularity everywhere. Local climbing competitions are showing signs of becoming more widespread in all markets. They are also expanding and diversifying their formats in order to better accommodate more climbers and circumstances.

Lastly, the feedback gained from this survey suggests that standard route setting practices are becoming more globally harmonized. All in all, this survey points to a gradual decline in regional differences, and there are indicators of global unity across the industry in just about every category and subject surveyed. 📌

L5 UP

ROUTE SETTER SHOE



Rock climbing rubber in the comfort of a shoe, this is the route setter's best friend.



unparallelsports.com

ROUTE SETTING AND RED-S

THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST RELATIVE ENERGY DEFICIENCY IN SPORT

TEXT & PHOTOS: UDO NEUMANN

◆ **Good route setting is essential for inclusive, fair, and sustainable climbing competitions.**

Inclusive means ensuring that people across a broad spectrum of body types can participate. Fair means avoiding morpho situations. A climb or move where the difficulty depends significantly on the climber's body shape or size is considered morpho, which is usually code for "hard for the short". But, and this is important, there is also anti-morpho, which is where taller climbers have a disadvantage. Think of small underclings close to bad footholds, where a taller climber's center of mass would be far outside their base of support.

Sustainable means helping athletes to remain competitive for more than just a couple of years and minimizing the risk of them experiencing negative (mental) health consequences later in life as a result of their participation in climbing comps. Since these three aspects are just as crucial when running a successful climbing facility as they are to competitive environments, these considerations should be relevant to you even if you don't have an interest in comp climbing.

Relative energy deficiency in sport (RED-S) is a syndrome caused by not eating enough food and thereby having insufficient energy available to account for the energy expended during sport. In an ongoing study among gymnasts, figure skaters, track athletes, and many athletes from other sports, climbers showed some of the most concerning results. The consequences of relative energy deficiency are impaired physiological functions including, but not limited to, metabolic rate, menstrual function, bone health, immunity, protein synthesis, and cardiovascular health. Since some of these consequences only manifest themselves later in life, they are often overlooked.

Let's take bone health as an example (unfortunately there are many, many more!).

Short- and long-term low energy availability (EA) has a negative impact on bone metabolism and health. Osteoporosis is a disease that weakens bones to the point where they break easily. It is called a "silent disease" because you may not notice any changes until a bone breaks. Before this happens, however, your bones will have been losing strength for many years. Bone is living tissue. To keep bones strong, your body constantly rebuilds this bone tissue. Sometime at around the age of 30, our bone mass stops increasing. To maintain healthy bones after this point, our goal is to keep as much bone as possible for as long as we can.

Although osteoporosis can strike at any age, it is most common among older people, especially older Caucasian and Asian women. Even if an athlete experiences none of the above-mentioned issues while climbing and exercising in the presence of energy deficiency during their competitive years, their bone health may have been negatively affected and the silent disease of osteoporosis might be closing in – ten, twenty, or even thirty years after they've ended their career.

THE SILENT DISEASE

It is this delay that makes RED-S such a serious concern. Once young athletes have started to become successful as a result of RED-S, we can't expect them to be motivated to gain weight just because of some potential future health risks that are completely abstract in their mind. In some cases, the adults (officials, coaches, and parents, etc.) who are meant to be taking care of the young athletes' health are neglecting their responsibilities. The status that these adults are gaining from being associated with a successful athlete has the potential to overshadow their concerns about the athlete's well-being.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

In no way should we release officials, coaches, and parents from their responsibilities, yet for the sake of this article, let's consider wall designers and route setters as the only responsible adults in the room. Since they have no vested interest in who actually wins the climbing comp, they are in a unique position to make our beloved anti-gravity activity inclusive, fair, and sustainable. This is why I chose to write this article for Route Setter Magazine.

Another motivation is that the Olympic format is clearly steering bouldering and lead climbing in a more predictable direction. The general audience understands when climbers fall off because of fatigue, whereas movement errors reveal themselves only to experts. At the European Championships in Munich, Germany, the boulders and the route at the combined event were far less interesting than those in the individual discipline events. The women's lead route in particular was devoid of any committing, creative, or risky situations. The obligations involved in presenting a mainstream sports event might lead to climbing becoming a dumbed-down fitness test. We should be aware of this and ask ourselves if we want to see climbing represented as simply being about a demonstration of fitness.

"SO STRONG"

That climber is "so strong" is what most people think (or say) when watching an impressive athlete. Even experts have difficulty identifying the other qualities contributing to a climber's ability. I'll come back to this later when I talk about the RIC scale.

Climbing is a physical activity performed against gravity. Climbing belongs to the group of anti-gravitational sports alongside activities like ski jumping, gymnastics, and pole vaulting. These sports are not about your absolute strength, but rather about your strength-to-weight ratio, which is also called relative strength.

"THE LAWS OF GRAVITY CAN BE FIGURED OUT MUCH MORE EASILY WITH INTUITION THAN ANYTHING ELSE."

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

Strength and power don't scale linearly. Unsurprisingly, larger muscle fibers generally produce more force and therefore tend to be stronger than smaller muscle fibers. However, while the absolute strength of muscle fibers tends to increase with fiber size, relative strength tends to decrease.

Let's consider two low-weight young male athletes, one who weighs 40 kg (88 lbs) and the other 60 kg (132 lbs). The lighter athlete can easily perform all manner of pull-ups, while the heavier athlete struggles a bit. In weightlifting, the heavier athlete can of course lift more in an absolute sense, but less relative to his own body weight. This is an example of how the principle of diminishing returns works in action and is the reason why coefficients and not body weight multipliers are used in strength sports to compare skill across weight classes.

When comparing world records in weightlifting, it is clear that relative strength diminishes as body weight increases.

The male athlete weighing 55 kg (121 lbs) has the highest relative strength, followed by the

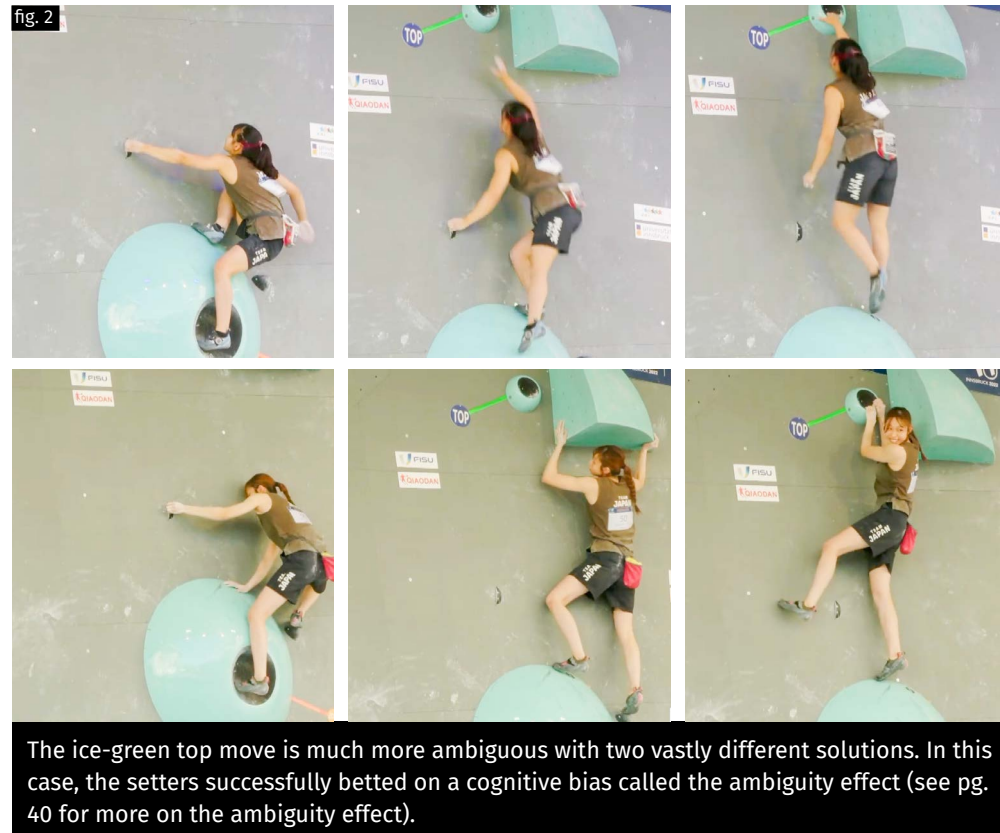
	Snatch	Clean & Jerk	Total	Relative strength
Male 55 kg	135 kg	166 kg	294 kg	5,34 %
Male 109 kg	199 kg	240 kg	435 kg	3,99 %
Female 45 kg	85 kg	108 kg	191 kg	4,25 %
Female 87 kg	132 kg	164 kg	294 kg	3,3 %

female athlete weighing 45 kg (99 lbs). The 109 kg (240 lbs) male can't match her relative strength. The 87 kg (192 lbs) female lifts about the same as the 55 kg (121 lbs) male in absolute terms, but is the weakest in terms of relative strength.

It's a law of nature that smaller and lighter animals have a better strength-to-weight ratio.

All things being equal, an animal's relative strength for its weight will decrease as the animal's size increases. In other words, an animal weighing 10 kg (22 lbs) will be stronger relative to its body weight than a 20 kg (44 lbs) version of the same animal. This means that the humble house cat is capable of more acrobatic stunts than a wild tiger. This is because strength increases in proportion to the surface area of a muscle's cross section, while the muscle's mass is based primarily on volume, which increases much more quickly than the cross section of muscle.

If you're an athlete, optimizing the strength-to-weight ratio is king when it comes to climb-



The ice-green top move is much more ambiguous with two vastly different solutions. In this case, the setters successfully betted on a cognitive bias called the ambiguity effect (see pg. 40 for more on the ambiguity effect).



Two examples of a boulder problem's top move, which is mainly testing the competitors' contact strength. All the successful competitors pretty much did the same thing. Similar solutions are an indicator of low complexity.

ing performance and overall athleticism, and if you become too heavy, this task simply becomes impossible due to this non-linear scaling. This issue is amplified because of the limited contact points in climbing. The consequence of this is that athletes may use methods to reduce their weight in order to gain a competitive advantage. They may perceive body fat as ballast, yet this adipose tissue is a vital endocrine organ in terms of general health. Excessive dieting can lead to the above-mentioned relative energy deficiency (RED-S) and the associated problems.

Still with me? Cool! Remember how I mentioned earlier that your climbing ability is of course not determined by your pure strength-to-weight ratio alone? Climbing is a combination of full body strength and strategic body positioning, requiring us to coordinate pushing and pulling movements in our arms, trunk, and legs. It involves the constant management of forces such as gravity, elastic recoil, torque, and momentum. We find ourselves exploring all sorts of movement variations while balancing our body weight.

We have to deal with infinite positions and moves that sometimes place contradictory demands on us. This, in turn, provides huge amounts of complex and novel movement information to the nervous system.

In fact, climbing demands such complex and integrated movements on the physical and psychological level that even the most professional athlete can't prepare for making the

right decision in every situation or train for every possible movement.

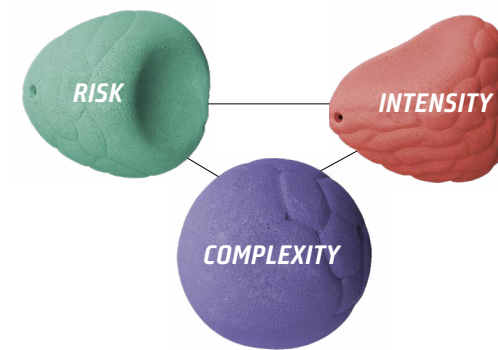
The RIC scale was developed with all this in mind.

THE RIC SCALE

The RIC scale is an elegant method for understanding climbs. Since being introduced by Jacky Godoffe and Tonde Katiyo, the concept has served as a complement to the standard grading system to further break down climbs and provide insights into sets.

Each climb can be broken down into the components R, I, and C. Before exploring and gaining an understanding of this concept, let's define these terms:

- R = risk
- I = intensity
- C = complexity



Strength-to-weight ratio and relative strength fall under the category of intensity. When it comes to intensity, all other things being equal, lighter climbers will perform better than heavier climbers in most scenarios. Please note that for the sake of my argument, I consider intensity in terms of contact strength, as intensity in compression climbing also involves other factors.

What about the other two factors, risk and complexity?

While intensity is often understood as referring to the physical aspects of climbing, risk and complexity refer to the cognitive side of things.

COGNITION

Cognition refers to "the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and

the senses". It encompasses all aspects of intellect, attention, thought, intelligence, the formation of knowledge, memory, judgment and evaluation, reasoning and computation, problem-solving and decision-making, comprehension, and more. Imagination is also a cognitive process, since it involves thinking about possibilities. Cognitive processes use existing knowledge to discover new knowledge. All in all, figuring out how to climb something is a cognitive process.

RISK

Risky climbs are often defined as low-percent-age, intimidating/spooky, and condition-dependent. In competitions, higher risk climbs cause climbers to feel insecure regardless of how strong they are. Our tolerance towards ambiguity is challenged, since contact points don't scream "take me here and you'll be fine" at us. Slopers, slabs, and committing smears never reward us with a feeling of being in control.



JULIE WURM, FIRST PROBLEM, FIRST TRY. SEMI-FINALS BWC CANMORE 2011

RISK: This problem from back in 2011 is still the gold standard as far as risky problems are concerned. It involved thin and insecure climbing that led to a committing dyno that added one crucial element to it that I'll explain later: loss aversion. This problem was only topped twice, by the climber pictured, Juliane Wurm, with said dyno, and by Mina Markovič with a static, albeit more physical method. It's therefore a good example of how there should be a price competitors have to pay when solving a risky or complex problem by physical means. Unfortunately, this is not always a given, as discussed below.

COMPLEXITY

Complexity refers to problem-solving, readability, and the ability to understand the movement required. Complex climbs generally involve intricate body positions and a high level of coordination.

If the problem-solving aspect of climbing is removed, as was the case at the recent European Youth Bouldering Championships, all that is left is a fitness test. During this competition, the kids could watch the other competitors climb and were shown videos of adults climbing the boulders. This meant that they tried to replicate the “right” solution and looked at their coaches or parents for approval.

In my book, that’s youth sports gone wrong. Only the kids’ ability to physically cope with the climbs was tested, leading them to believe that a good strength-to-weight ratio was of utmost importance. Some of the kids might have secretly decided to improve their ratio by losing weight. They may well feel that problem-solving surely can’t be all that important in climbing, seeing as the beta was read to them by their coaches.

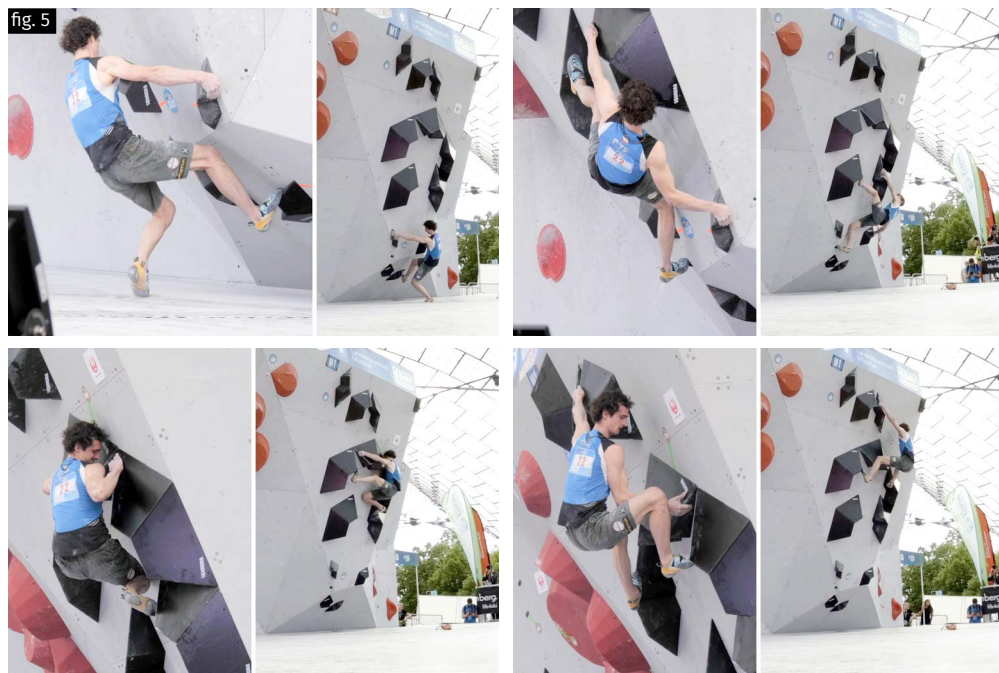
Wouldn’t it be much more beneficial for their future development as humans and climbers to place emphasis on quickly finding the most efficient solution to a complex and risky crux? In youth climbing comps in particular, it is important to place more emphasis on the cognitive aspects of risk and complexity.

For the kids who might have decided to lose weight to gain an advantage for the next comp, let’s consider what Dr. Jennifer Gaudiani says in the remarkable documentary film LIGHT by Caroline Treadway: “a mammal that is malnourished... isn’t going to be playful, is not going to be creative, and is not going to be adventurous! They are going to get really rigid, rule-bound, and serious!”

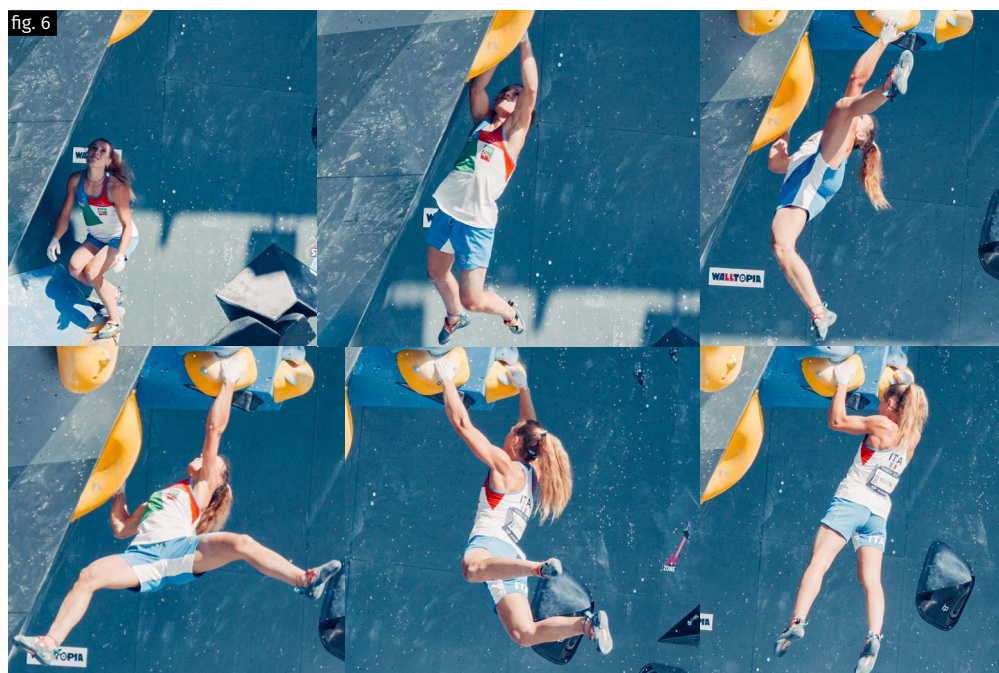
Let this sink in. How likely is it that this malnourished mammal will succeed in complex climbs without being playful and creative? How likely is it to be able to complete risky climbs without being adventurous?

SOLVING RISKY AND COMPLEX CHALLENGES IN PLAYFUL, CREATIVE, AND ADVENTUROUS WAYS

Consciously or subconsciously, setters often tease our cognitive biases.



Complexity: One climber who always shines in complex climbs is Adam Ondra. The panel above shows him climbing a problem involving tricky positioning and intricate loading directions that only he could decipher.



One movement sequence representing a perfect blend of risk, intensity, and complexity. All the way to the zone (the yellow hold on the far right), the spatial arrangement forced the competitors to mix and match their limbs’ trajectories. Once initiated, the sequence couldn’t be stopped before the zone, which is a hallmark of risky and complex climbing situations.

Cognitive biases are systematic errors in thinking that negatively impact decision-making quality and outcomes. Here are some of the many biases that can hold climbers back from performing to their best:

Loss aversion

First identified by famed scientists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, loss aversion relates to how the pain of losing something is more powerful than the pleasure of winning it. As such, humans will typically do more to avoid losses than they will to seek gains.

An example of where loss aversion came into play was at the 2011 Boulder World Cup in Canmore, Canada where a competitor hesitated to do a committing move two-thirds up a challenging climb.

Escalation of commitment

This is where people use their cumulative prior investment to justify why they are continuing to invest in a decision, despite new evidence suggesting that the decision was probably wrong. An example of where this might occur in climbing is when a competitor



Climbers had to anticipate the end position before initiating the two crux moves pictured here. Problem solving, decision-making, and imagination are cognitive processes that involve thinking about possibilities. Cognitive processes use existing knowledge to discover new knowledge. The climbers even had to carefully consider how to hold the top and some competitors fell victim to decision fatigue.

GOODGRIP

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Exhibit 1: Innsbruck (Austria) Finals W1. There is no element of either risk or complexity in this route, at least not given the abilities of female climbers competing in 2022. Long reaches in between positive holds mean that problems like this risk being morpho, thus favoring taller climbers (top left). A boulder problem I was surprised to see in 2022!



Exhibit 2: It was announced that W2 in Innsbruck's finals would start with a triple dyno. It was topped (both flashed) by two athletes, both of whom did not do the triple dyno. This method was very intense, but not as complex and risky as the beta intended by the setters. The climber pictured didn't even use the middle of the holds making up the triple dyno. None of the other competitors who tried the dyno even made it to the zone. While I applaud the two successful competitors for identifying this problem's affordances, I cannot help but wonder if the setters responsible are in tune with the female competitors' capabilities!

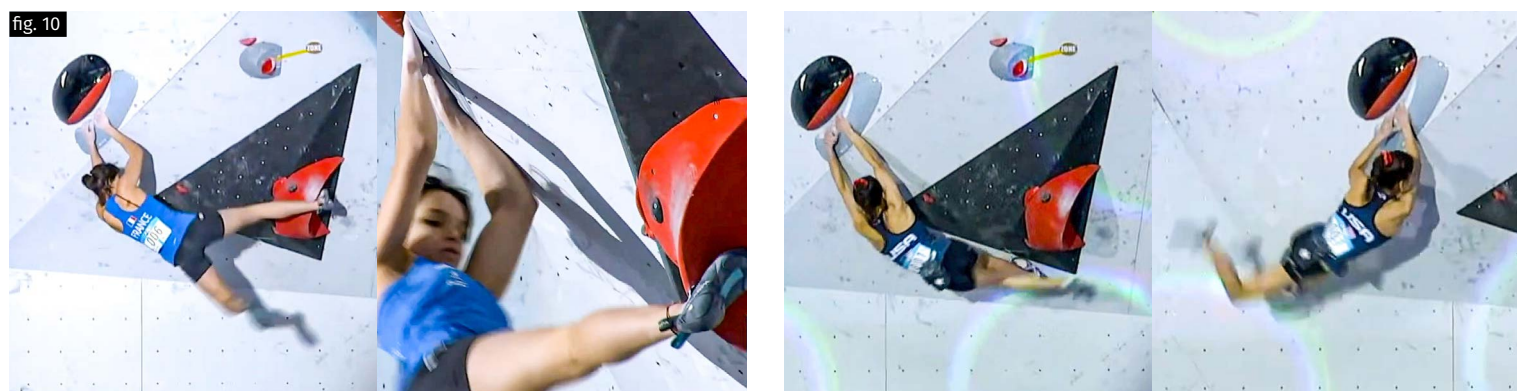


Exhibit 3: Seoul (South Korea) Finals W3: A dyno is made more complex when the target hold can only be held with the help of an opposing toe hook that you need to catch. A toe hook catch was not needed here though, as climbers could hold onto just the handhold. Mind you, the picture on the right shows the backswing! In ideal setting, strong climbers shouldn't be allowed to avoid complexity!

figures out the beta and sticks with it despite ending up in the wrong position to do the crucial last move.

Neglect of probability

This is the tendency to disregard probability when making a decision under uncertainty. For example, how many times have you actually practiced the stunt that you are thinking about performing to solve this boulder problem? Innovative setters sometimes create

a situation that hasn't featured in a comp before. Neglect of possibility may lead to athletes trying something that they have never practiced before instead of thinking about which of their skills they could use to meet the problem's requirements and then gauging the result.

Ambiguity effect

This is the tendency to avoid options for which the probability of a favorable out-

come is unknown. An example of this is when athletes do not use unfamiliar holds and wall features to their full potential. Classic, modern dual-texture holds give setters new opportunities here.

On the previous page (fig. 6 & 7) are two brilliant examples of a very attractive balance of risk, intensity, and complexity from the recent European Championships. Although these problems were very intense, ambiguity

tolerance, forward thinking, spatial awareness, and adaptability paid off in both cases. In both examples, one move had to lead into the next and momentum had to be conserved. The malnourished mammals mentioned above certainly wouldn't benefit from their superior strength-to-weight ratio here!

IN CONCLUSION

How is it going? Are route setters the responsible adults in the room?

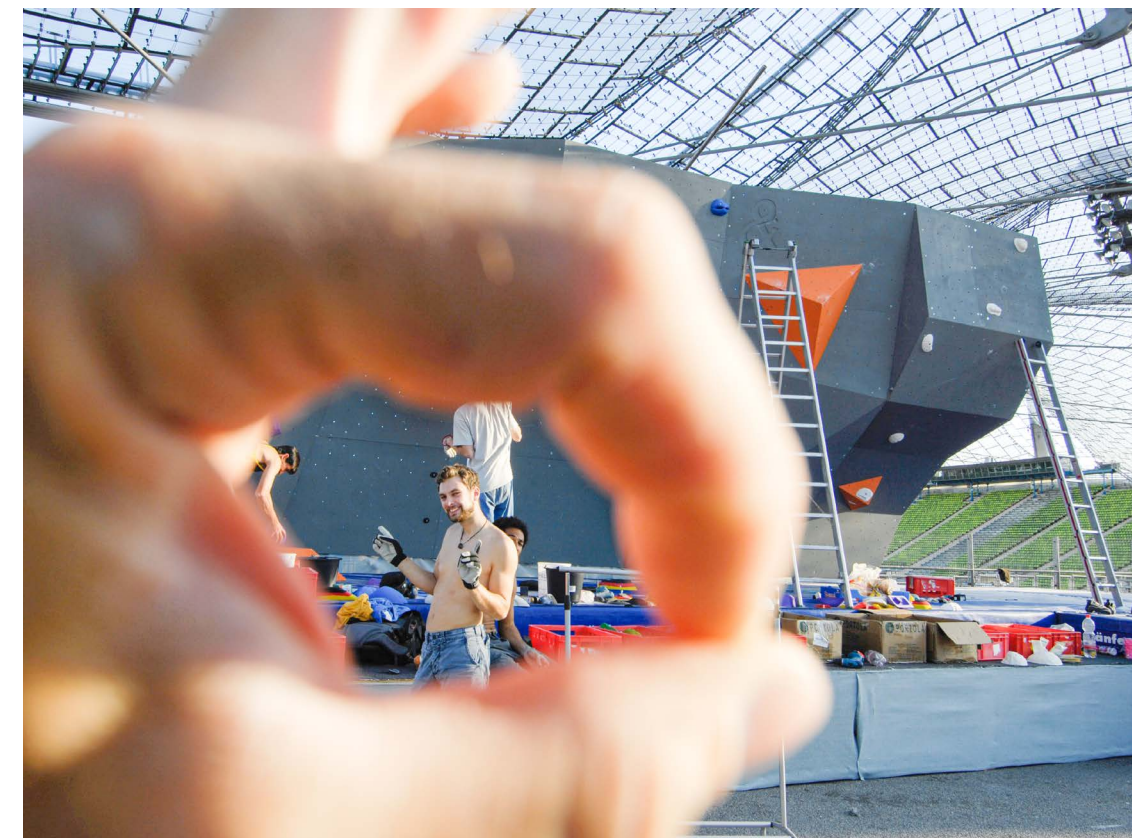
At the start of this article, I stated that setters are in a unique position to make our beloved anti-gravity activity inclusive, fair, and sustainable.

They have the potential to create playful, creative, and adventurous climbing competition environments.

However, route setters need to make more of a conscious effort in this regard. On the left (pg. 40, fig. 8/9/10) are three examples from the 2022 Boulder World Cup season that make me wonder if setters have the option to stand their ground when organizers demand predictable, easy-to-digest, fast-moving comps catering to a mainstream audience. There certainly seems to be a tendency for women's comp routes to lack creative complexity.

As they gain popularity and exposure, climbing competitions are at risk of being seen as competitions where athletes ridden with RED-S are most often successful. The design of a climbing competition, its wall, and its route setting determine if they are a pure fitness test, in which the athlete's strength-to-weight ratio trumps everything or if problem-solving and decision-making are equally as important for success.

If we want inclusive, fair, and sustainable climbing competitions, we need to place more emphasis on the cognitive elements of climbing, namely risk and complexity on the RIC scale. Setters can draw on their expertise and use modern holds and, at least in bouldering, modern wall shapes to achieve this. As far as lead climbing is concerned, a discussion about the steepness of the walls would be helpful. Ultimately though, it is up to the officials and decision-makers to consider athlete well-being across the board when planning and designing climbing comps. 🍷



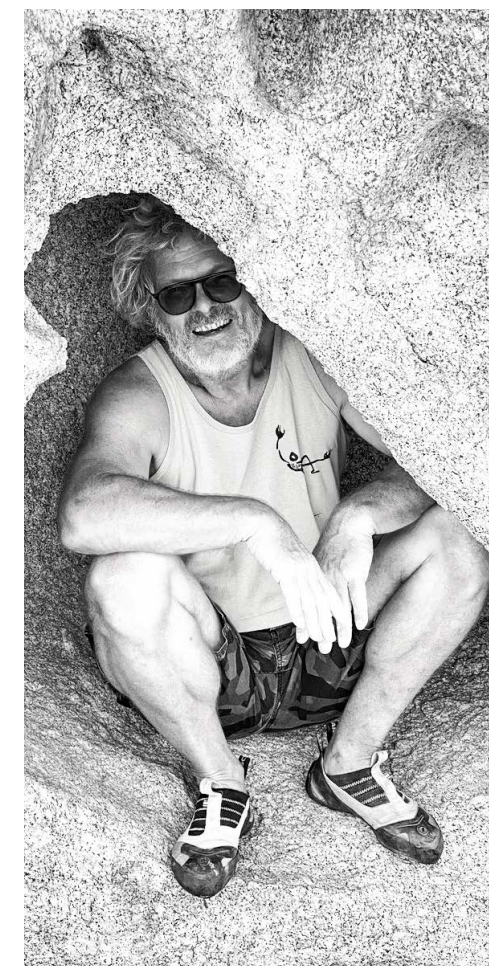
UDO NEUMANN

Born: 1963

Lives in: Köln, Germany

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

Udo Neumann is one of the climbing world's most highly respected and sought after bio-mechanics, skill acquisition, and motor control experts. He began climbing in 1982, and since then, he's been documenting and analyzing the sport of bouldering in all sorts of media – books, films, photographs, and mixed media. He's shared his findings and knowledge in countless publications, both off- and online. He authored some of the most successful training books, like "Performance Rock Climbing", "Der XI. Grad", and "Lizenz zum Klettern". Recent video publications include "Climbing Technique of the 21st Century" and the "Ideas to Improve your Climbing" series. Udo has traveled all continents, rock climbing and bouldering. From 2009 until 2017, he was the German Bouldering Team coach, training world and European champions. Nowadays he's advising federations and training teams as well as coaching athletes and coaches.



CARLIE LEBRETON

OCEANIA'S FIRST IFSC ROUTE SETTER

INTERVIEW: CODY ROTH



Carlie doing the Rose move on Gateway, 28/7c+, Blue Mountains.

Carlie LeBreton is Australia's as well as Oceania's first IFSC-certified route setter. Carlie brings over 24 years of climbing experience to her route setting, and throughout her teens she was THE competitor to beat across Australia. Carlie started route setting alongside competing when she was 16, and she's co-owner of Sydney's Villawood Climbing Gym. On the weekends, you'll either find her climbing in the Blue Mountains just outside Sydney in New South Wales, where she lives, or at the renowned power endurance crag Nowra in the South Coast region of New South Wales. We sat down with Carlie to find out more about how she got to where she is and what it's like to be a route setter and climber in Australia.

RSM: How and when did you get into climbing?

Carlie: I started at a young age through school. I was 14, so that's like 24 years ago or so – a long time ago! Once I started climbing, I didn't pick out any other sports at school. That was it – climbing became my sport. From there, I started competing and shortly thereafter I started route setting. I think I was 16 when the owner of the gym handed me a T-bar (wrench) and said, "Why don't you start setting some routes?" That was pretty cool.

RSM: Is it typical for schools in Australia to offer climbing as a school sport?

Carlie: A lot of the schools in Australia have a weekly sports program offering an array of sports. You get to leave school and do a sport during school time. There's the usual stuff like soccer and tennis, but our school offered different sports, like climbing. We got to go to the local climbing gym, Hangdog, which was in the south Sydney suburb of Wollongong where I grew up and went to school. At that time, in the late 1990s, there were only three or four gyms in the Sydney area, so it was handy that Hangdog was in Wollongong and we could easily reach it by train.

Six months after I started climbing, I was already working at the gym, washing holds and doing birthday parties. I pretty much just lived at the gym. There was a group of us that became obsessed with climbing.

RSM: When did you start competing?

Carlie: I started competing a year after I started climbing. At that time in Sydney, there weren't many junior comps so I had to compete in the Open Adult category. I think I won my first Open when I was 16. From there, I continued competing into my early 20s, and after that I started to focus on route setting. The junior scene did progress during that period. We went to the US for international junior competitions put on by Touchstone and Hans Florine. During my last year competing as a junior, I won the event they put on in San Francisco. I was the Australian national champion seven times.



Photo: Tara Davidson

RSM: How and when did you transition from competing to route setting for competitions?

Carlie: I injured my shoulder during my last full season competing. I had to have it operated on and then I had to recover. I still competed a little when I came back from that injury, but there weren't a lot of competition setters at that time so I naturally transitioned to setting, as there was a void that needed to be filled.

**"THE MORE I'M INVOLVED IN CLIMBING,
THE MORE PSYCHE I HAVE FOR SETTING."**

RSM: What was it like being a female route setter at that time? Was there any pushback?

Carlie: There weren't a lot of people setting at a high level at that time, so being a woman didn't really come into play. Any sort of chauvinism within route setting has only been an issue more recently in Australia as route setting has become more professionalized and popular and getting positions has become more competitive.

RSM: Are there currently many women route setting in Australia?

Carlie: I would say that most gyms have close to two women on their setting team and most are striving to achieve an even balance of male and female route setters. With comp setting, there used to be just one female setter within the setting team at each event, but now there are more comps where the team is split 50/50. At our last junior nationals, it was 50/50.

RSM: Do you have a preference between setting for bouldering or lead?

Carlie: I do prefer lead setting, mainly because I mostly sport climb. I wouldn't say that parkour bouldering is my strong suit! There's definitely more uncertainty when setting for bouldering competitions. You have to do more finger-crossing (compared to lead).

RSM: Do you think it's important for elite route setters to be competent in both lead and bouldering setting or do you think we're getting to a point where setting should be more specialized?

Carlie: I'm not sure... I guess I think it's good if a setter can draw from and understand both disciplines. I think it makes you a better setter because you have a broader awareness of movement and skills to draw from. In Australia, there aren't very many quality lead walls, which does make it harder for people to gain the experience needed to set that discipline.

RSM: Can you tell us about how you became an IFSC-certified setter?

Carlie: In 2019, the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) asked their member federations to put two setters forward for certification consideration for the 2020 season. They encouraged federations to nominate one female and one male setter. Due to Covid, the 2020 season was canceled, but at the start of 2021 the IFSC approved me. In addition to lead and bouldering, I've also done a lot of work with paraclimbing over the years, which I think helped solidify my approval.



Photo: Tara Davidson

RSM: Has there been any word on who will be part of the setting team at the 2024 Paris Olympics, or is it too far out to say?

Carlie: It's still too early to say, and to be honest, I'm pretty keen to keep my focus on paraclimbing and on helping it to progress. The hope is to get paraclimbing into the Los Angeles Paralympics in 2028.

RSM: In addition to all the comp setting you do, you're also a gym owner and full-time commercial route setter, right?

Carlie: Yes, I own and run the Villawood Climbing Gym in Sydney. We set routes twice a week and then on the other days I do the administrative work. We're a rope and bouldering facility so we typically do a day of rope setting and a day of bouldering setting.

RSM: Do you find that climbing outside helps to inspire your route setting?

Carlie: I think so. The more I'm involved in climbing, the more psyche I have for setting. I grew up near a steep power cliff called Nowra, and that place has influenced my route setting over the years.

RSM: How do you manage to still find the time and passion to regularly climb outside?

Carlie: Climbing is everything to us, so making it work is key. I think as long as you have a good plan, you can make it work. I find short little sessions work best. I love climbing and everything about it so much. Training, setting, and the outdoors are the best.

I try to climb outside twice a week. We live just outside Sydney in the Blue Mountains and now that my son is in school, it's easier to fit it in! I get to climb with my husband most weekends. 🍀

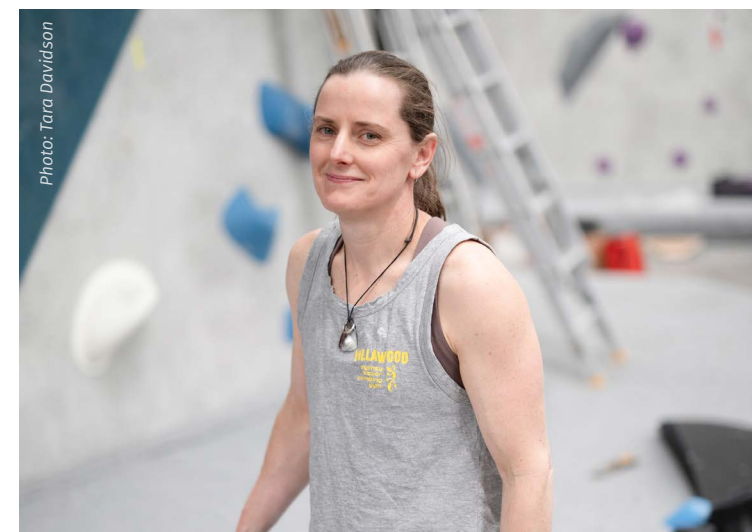


Photo: Tara Davidson

CARLIE LEBRETON

Born: 1981

Lives in: Blue Mountains, Australia

Background: IFSC Route Setter, national head setter - lead and boulder, manager and head setter at Sydney Indoor Climbing Gym Villawood, mother of three

RSM: Speaking of paraclimbing, what is it like setting for a Paraclimbing World Cup?

Carlie: It's definitely a little bit harder because, similar to a youth comp, there are so many different aspects you have to account for and set for, and you have to test out all the moves among all the categories with a lot of scrutiny. For example, in the Lower Extremity Amputee category you might have someone missing a lower left limb and someone missing a lower right limb and you have to do your best to ensure that the route is equally challenging for both climbers. Plus, the routes of course still need to put on a good show and offer the competitors the most fun possible. In the men's Lower Extremity Amputee category, by the way, competitors are climbing 8a to 8a+ (5.13b to 5.13c) these days!

Paraclimbing took off in Australia back in 2017. It was something that I was entrusted with and, at the start, I did clinics and took in a lot of feedback from paraclimbing athletes. A lot of the athletes climbed at my gym so I was able to climb with them and get a good feel for the movement and individual moves needed.

There were three Paraclimbing World Cups this year, and I was the chief setter at the Salt Lake City stop in the US. Next year, there will hopefully be three again, plus the World Championships. This year, I did just this event whereas last year I did two. The atmosphere at the Salt Lake City event was great.

RSM: You were also the head setter at the Oceania Olympic Trials, right?

Carlie: I was! The event was rescheduled a few times because of Covid. It was pretty cool being responsible for sending someone to the Olympics. I was so nervous before the lead final! We were only able to set that Olympic format one time prior to the trial. It's so different factoring in athletes' performance and fatigue when they have to compete in all three categories. Because of Covid closures, a lot of the athletes were mostly just training at home leading up to the trial. The gyms had just opened up once again shortly before the event. So that made gauging fitness levels extra difficult as well.

RSM: Did it go the way you wanted in the end?

Carlie: It did! The best climbers on the day won!



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Jerome Meyer sending one of the boulder problems at the inaugural Best Trick contest, 2009.

GYM SPOTLIGHT

BSIDE CLIMBING

A TALK WITH MARZIO NARDI

TEXT & INTERVIEW: CODY ROTH / PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BSIDE

◆ **Turin, the capital of Italy's northwestern Piedmont region, is steeped in sporting tradition. Home to two fiercely rival Serie A soccer teams, Juventus and Torino F.C., and host of the 2006 Winter Olympics, this city nestled in the foothills of the western Alps lives for sport. Perhaps somewhat lesser known to the masses, Turin also laid the foundation for Italy's modern climbing gym revolution. When Bside opened its doors in the mid-nineties, it made a bold statement and presented a model for other Italian cities and subsequent gym founders to follow. All these years later, Bside continues to thrive and maintain its iconic status. RSM caught up with one of its founders and former Italian National Champion and IFSC route setter, Marzio Nardi, to find out**

RSM: Who founded Bside and when?

Marzio: We set up the association in 1996 and opened the first facility in 1997. Luca Giammarco and I (Marzio Nardi) were the founding partners. We had been at university together, and after graduating were both looking for job opportunities, though in reality neither of us really knew what we wanted to do. So, after a few years of doing small jobs in fitness centers (which were all the rage in the 90s) we met up again and found ourselves thinking of how we could create work for ourselves that we would enjoy. The first climbing gyms were emerging in France at the time, and Aix-en-Provence's Salle Grimper gave us great motivation to do something similar. We rented a warehouse near the center of Turin and made everything up as we went along. We had no idea how to construct walls, and we barely knew how to hold a drill let alone a circular saw! But after four months of work we managed to get the first walls up. The next step was to think of a name for the place. While working on the gym we were listening to loads of trip hop and everything else that came out of the Bristol music scene in the 90s, with Massive Attack, Roni Size, and Portishead being the musical mainstays around that time. Very often, when I was on my way home after 12 hours of work, I used to listen to a radio show that put lesser known music on the map by showcasing B-side recordings. This was Bside in a nutshell – our gym has helped put the lesser known side of climbing on the map.

RSM: What was the gym scene like in Italy and Turin in 1997?

Marzio: There were no climbing gyms in Turin at the time, or rather none like the ones we wanted. We did have one enormous facility that was pretty futuristic for when it was built (1981). The "Guido Rossa climbing gym" was a sort of miniature mountain housed in an indoor stadium (the Palavela). Here it was all about "classic" rope climbing, with the mini mountain shaped by architectural elements like chimneys, roofs, and vertical concrete walls. In the late 1980s, I remember you would still find people climbing there in boots. We wanted

◆ **Capoluogo della regione Piemonte, Torino è una città ricca di tradizione sportiva. Sede di due squadre di calcio profondamente rivali come Juventus e Torino, e ospite dei Giochi Olimpici Invernali del 2006, questa città incastonata ai piedi delle Alpi occidentali vive per lo sport. Fatto meno noto alle masse: Torino ha anche gettato le basi per la moderna rivoluzione delle palestre di arrampicata in Italia. L'apertura del Bside a metà degli anni Novanta fu un atto di coraggio e rappresentò un modello da seguire per altre città italiane e per i successivi fondatori di palestre. A distanza di anni, Bside continua a prosperare e a mantenere il suo status cult. RSM ha incontrato uno dei fondatori, l'ex campione italiano d'arrampicata e tracciatore IFSC, Marzio Nardi, per farsi raccontare di più.**

RSM: Come è nato il progetto Bside?

Marzio: Nel 1996 abbiamo costituito l'associazione e nel 1997 è nata la prima struttura. Io (Marzio Nardi) e Luca Giammarco siamo i soci fondatori. Dopo aver frequentato l'università assieme, ognuno di noi ha provato a cercare qualche sbocco lavorativo, ma in realtà entrambi non sapevamo veramente cosa volevamo fare, quindi dopo qualche anno di piccoli lavori all'interno di centri sportivi dedicati al fitness (negli anni 90 era estremamente di moda) ci siamo ritrovati e abbiamo pensato di inventarci un lavoro che ci piacesse. In Francia stavano nascendo le prime sale d'arrampicata e la Salle Grimper di Aix-en-Provence fu per noi un grande stimolo per creare una situazione analoga. Affittammo un capannone vicino al centro di Torino e ci inventammo tutto. Non avevamo nessun concetto per la costruzione dei muri e sapevamo a malapena tenere in mano un avvitatore e una sega circolare, ma dopo 4 mesi di lavoro riuscimmo a montare le prime pareti. Il passo successivo fu trovare un nome per quel posto. All'epoca, durante i lavori ascoltavamo un sacco di musica trip hop e tutto quello che veniva dalla scena musicale di Bristol degli anni 90. Massive Attack, Roni Size, Portishead erano la colonna musicale di quei giorni. In particolare quando tornavo a casa, dopo 12 ore di lavoro, lungo la strada ascoltavo una trasmissione radiofonica che faceva conoscere questo lato nascosto della musica: il suo lato "B". Bside appunto... Proprio come la nostra palestra avrebbe fatto conoscere il lato nascosto dell'arrampicata.





Stefano Ghisolfi climbing at the 2017 Best Trick contest and 20th anniversary party.

RSM: Com'era la scena delle palestre in Italia e a Torino nel 1997?

Marzio: In quegli anni a Torino non c'erano palestre d'arrampicata, o meglio non c'erano palestre come quelle che volevamo noi. C'era un enorme struttura avveniristica per l'epoca in cui fu costruita (1981). La "Palestra di roccia Guido Rossa" era una sorta di montagna in miniatura posta sotto la cupola di un palazzetto (il Palavela). Camini, tetti, pareti verticali in cemento erano gli elementi architettonici che davano forma a questa piccola montagna in cui si praticava l'arrampicata "classica" con la corda. Mi ricordo che alla fine degli anni 80,

ci trovavi ancora gente che ci scalava con gli scarponi. Noi volevamo qualcosa di diverso, più divertente e immediato, che fosse fruibile a tutti senza troppi concetti restrittivi ma soprattutto che ci allenasse per quella che era la nostra passione dell'epoca: il bouldering. Ovvero il "Lato B" dell'arrampicata classica, il lato più divertente

something different, something more fun and immediate that could be enjoyed by everyone without too many restrictive ideas, but above all something that would train us for our passion at the time: bouldering. Bouldering is the exact B-side of classic climbing, the side that is way more fun.

RSM: What changes have you seen since 1997?

Marzio: Obviously, the biggest changes have been in the numbers taking part and how on trend we are. Whereas once we were just a few marginalized souls, now there are tons of us, and what we do is really hip. At one time, there were very few young people involved and at 25 or 30 you could still be considered a youngster with good prospects. Today, a 25-year-old will already have 20 years of climbing behind them and be an athlete at the peak of their career. Everything happens incredibly early now, perhaps too early, and the competition era has influenced this a ton. You start climbing and they immediately put a bib number on you. If you function in competitions that's fine, and you continue for a few years, but if it doesn't work for you, you switch sports, continually searching for a place where you can "function"... and in the end, you stop loving sport, because you don't know what it is you like about sport: just winning or actually doing it. Gym coaches and parents play a pivotal role in this whole process. Aside from this phenomenon of the mass appeal it now has, climbing has basically stayed the same: You do it with your four limbs and you try not to fall. At one time the holds were the size of fingernails and cost 50 cents each, now we mostly use resin holds worth thousands of euros.

RSM: What have you done to ensure the longevity of Bside?

Marzio: Who knows? We certainly don't! Maybe it's our originality, maybe the fact that we stick to our roots, maybe our unbusinesslike appearance, the chaos that somehow makes you feel at home, the old photos alongside works from Turin artists, the foosball table that was the first piece of equipment we bought in 1997, the rusty weights

RSM: Quali cambiamenti hai notato tra il 1997 e il 2022?

Marzio: Ovviamente il cambiamento più grande è legato ai numeri e alla moda. Se un tempo eravamo pochi e emarginati adesso siamo tanti e di tendenza. Un tempo i giovani erano pochissimi e a 25/30 anni potevi ancora essere considerato un "giovane dalle belle speranze". Oggi a 25 anni hai già 20 anni di arrampicata alle spalle, sei un atleta nel fiore della sua carriera. Tutto è diventato incredibilmente precoce, forse troppo e l'era delle competizioni ha condizionato tantissimo questo aspetto. Inizi ad arrampicare e ti mettono subito un pettorale, se funzioni in gara va bene e continui per qualche anno, se non funzioni, cambi sport nella continua ricerca di un luogo dove potrai "funzionare"... e alla fine smetti di amare lo sport, perché non hai compreso quel che ti piace dello sport: vincere o praticarlo. In tutto questo processo gli allenatori delle palestre e i genitori hanno un ruolo fondamentale. A parte questo fenomeno di "massificazione" dell'attività, l'arrampicata resta sempre la stessa: si fa con 4 arti e si prova a non cadere. Un tempo la si faceva su degli appigli grossi come un unghia che costavano 50 centesimi ora la si fa per lo più su volumi in resina da migliaia di euro.



The 2009 Best Trick lineup pre-comp and...



...the 2017 Best Trick winners post-comp.

RSM: Cosa avete fatto per assicurare la longevità di Bside?

Marzio: Chi lo sa? Neppure noi lo sappiamo. Forse la nostra originalità, forse il fatto di restare attaccati alle nostre radici, forse il nostro aspetto poco imprenditoriale, quel disordine che in qualche modo ti accoglie e ti fa sentire a casa, le foto del passato attaccate alle pareti a fianco alle opere di artisti torinesi, il calcio balilla (il primo attrezzo che abbiamo comperato nel 1997), i pesi arrugginiti e i travi in legno in cui ci si sono attaccate migliaia di perso-

and the wooden hangboards gripped by thousands of people over the years... I guess, basically, stepping inside Bside is like stepping into history, into many different histories... Maybe that's the only thing that enables us to survive in the climbing business.

RSM: How many updates or renovations has Bside had over the years?

Marzio: Bside has undergone continuous renovation, as we have periodically added and changed wall profiles. Also, we did a big relocation in 2004 when we moved from Piazza Carducci to our current location on Via Ravina, where the gym has likewise seen continual transformations. The latest of these was in 2019.

RSM: How do you manage to strike a balance between being a gym for elite climbing as well as for people who are new to climbing?

Marzio: It's always been like this at Bside, ever since the beginning. Even when we first opened in 1997, we hosted friends who were the world's most talented climbers at that time: Cristian Brenna, Luca Zardini, Christian Core, Mauro Calibani. They would often visit us for training sessions, climbing alongside people who were putting on climbing shoes for the first time and maybe getting advice from the pros. In essence, "champions" have never been anything rare or mysterious at Bside, and they've always just been seen as part of the gang. From the start, many big names have passed through our gym, not only to train but also to participate in the competitions we have organized. In 2000, we staged one of the first private international contests. No federations, no sponsors, no broadcasting. Just a bunch of hotheads in a warehouse, with the likes of Core, Brenna, Calibani, JB Tribout, François Lombard, the Petit brothers and Antony Lamiche among them... In other words, the cream of the sport climbing world at the time. Then, in 2017, to crown 20 years of Bside, the greatest climbers of that era, Hukkataival, Megos, Ghisolfi, Bombardi, and Gullsten brought the "Best Trick" to life: a competition formula exclusive to Bside that had already been the subject of experiment on Bside's walls in 2009 by a different generation of champions: Lamiche, Roth, Moroni, Ceria and Meyer.

RSM: You and one of the other partners, Luca Giammarco, are also passionate skateboarders. Has this sport influenced the way you see your gym?

Marzio: I really don't know... Maybe in the sense that it gave us a desire to make the sport "urban" when in reality it wasn't. But either way, for me skateboarding is an escape. An escape from all that I am, from all that I have become thanks to climbing... Skateboarding is my own B-side!

RSM: What is the best thing about having a gym in Turin?

Marzio: The fact that, despite being a city with almost a million inhabitants, Turin is still like a village for those doing certain activities, such as climbing. Lately, it has become an extremely young city with students

ne... Insomma, entrando dentro al Bside sembra di fare un salto dentro la storia, dentro a tante storie... Forse è solo questo che ci permette di sopravvivere nel business dell'arrampicata.

RSM: Quanti aggiornamenti/ristrutturazioni ha avuto Bside nel corso degli anni?

Marzio: Il Bside ha avuto ristrutturazioni continue, periodicamente abbiamo aggiunto e cambiato i profili del muro. In tutto questo abbiamo avuto un grande trasloco nel 2004, cambiando la sede da Piazza Carducci a Via Ravina, nostra attuale sede dove più volte la palestra ha avuto continue trasformazioni. Una anche nel 2019.

RSM: Come riuscite a trovare un equilibrio tra l'essere una palestra per arrampicatori d'élite e al contempo per neofiti?

Marzio: Il Bside è sempre stato così sin dall'inizio. Già nel 1997, quando abbiamo aperto, ospitavamo i nostri amici che all'epoca erano tra i più forti arrampicatori del mondo: Cristian Brenna, Luca Zardini, Christian Core, Mauro Calibani. Spesso ci facevano visita per delle sessioni d'allenamento ed arrampicavano a fianco di gente che per la prima volta metteva le scarpe e che magari riceveva consigli da parte loro. Insomma, tra i muri del Bside il "campione" non è mai stato un UFO, è sempre stato considerato uno di noi e di campioni dalla

"WHEREAS ONCE WE WERE JUST A FEW MARGINALIZED SOULS, NOW THERE ARE TONS OF US, AND WHAT WE DO IS REALLY HIP."

"SE UN TEMPO ERAVAMO POCHI E EMARGINATI ADESSO SIAMO TANTI E DI TENDENZA."

nostra palestra ne son passati tantissimi sin da subito, per allenarsi ma anche per le gare che organizzavamo. Nel 2000 abbiamo organizzato uno dei primi contest internazionali privati. Niente Federazione, niente sponsor, niente televisioni. Solo un branco di scalmanati in un capannone, tra cui JB Tribout, François Lombard, i fratelli Petit, Antony Lamiche, Christian Core, Mauro Calibani, Cristian Brenna... insomma la crema dell'arrampicata mondiale dell'epoca. Poi nel 2017, a coronare i 20 anni di Bside, sono venuti i più forti 'dell'epoca odierna. Hukkataival, Megos, Ghisolfi, Bombardi e Gullsten hanno dato vita al Best Trick: una formula di gara esclusiva del Bside e già sperimentata nel 2009 proprio sui muri del Bside con altri campioni che hanno segnato un'epoca: Lamiche, Roth, Moroni, Ceria, Mejer.

RSM: Tu e uno degli altri soci, Luca Giammarco, siete anche appassionati di skateboard. Questo sport ha influenzato il modo in cui vedete la vostra palestra?

Marzio: Boh, non saprei... forse la voglia di rendere "urbano" uno sport che in realtà non lo era. Comunque per me lo skateboarding è una fuga. Una fuga da tutto ciò che sono, da tutto ciò che sono diventato grazie all'arrampicata... Lo skateboarding è il mio lato B!

RSM: Qual è la parte migliore dell'aver una palestra a Torino?

Marzio: Che Torino è una città con quasi un milione di abitanti ma resta ancora un paese per chi pratica certe attività come l'arrampicata. Poi ultimamente è diventata una città estremamente giovane, frequentata da studenti da tutte le parti d'Europa e siccome l'arrampi-

from all over Europe. And since climbing has become so widespread and so many students come to Bside, we are fortunate to see our name being exported outside of Italy.

RSM: What is the most challenging thing?

Marzio: The fact that Turin is a city: it stinks, there's so much traffic, the people (the ones who don't climb) are always pissed off. The fact that Turin is 40 minutes from where I live and that, since I'm getting older, it's becoming more of a pain in the ass to put up with it all... Luckily there is Bside: a little oasis in this warped world.

RSM: Looking to the future, what are the next goals for Bside?

Marzio: Surviving the increase in gas and electricity costs. We already know it's going to be a tough year, but we're used to taking one step at a time. The future scares us, but that's what we like best. Otherwise we would have done something different.

RSM: Lastly, is Bside a home for Torino F.C. or Juventus fans?

Marzio: Bside is a home for everyone: peace, love and climbing! :-)

cata si è diffusa così tanto e tanti studenti vengono al Bside, abbiamo la fortuna di portare il nostro nome all'estero.

RSM: Qual è la parte più impegnativa?

Marzio: Che Torino è una città: puzza, c'è traffico, la gente (quella che non scala) è incazzata. Che Torino sta a 40 minuti da casa mia e che pian piano sto diventando vecchio e rompi coglioni per sopportare tutto questo. Fortunatamente c'è il Bside: una piccola isola in questo mondo perverso.

RSM: Guardando al futuro, quali sono i prossimi obiettivi di Bside?

Marzio: Sopravvivere all'aumento del costo del gas e della luce. Sarà un anno difficile e già lo sappiamo ma noi siamo abituati ad arrampicare a vista... Il futuro ci spaventa ma è la cosa che più ci piace... Se no avremmo fatto altro.

RSM: E per finire, al Bside si tifa Torino o Juventus?

Marzio: Il Bside è una casa per tutti: Peace, Love and Climbing! :-)



About Bside's three partners

Marzio and Luca share the same year and month of birth – December 1968 – while Stecca was born in 1976. All three are graduates of Turin's Higher Institute of Physical Education (ISEF) and are certified climbing instructors. Marzio is also an IFSC certified route setter but hung up his wrenches in 2010.

Bio dei tre soci di Bside

Marzio e Luca sono entrambi del 1968 e addirittura dello stesso mese, dicembre. Stecca è del 1976. Tutti e tre sono diplomati all'Istituto Superiore di Educazione Fisica (ISEF) e istruttori d'arrampicata. Marzio è anche tracciatore internazionale ma dal 2010 ha ritirato le chiavi nell'armadio.



System wall - frame

Kilterboard, Moonboard, Brand-Board



The benkyclimbing system wall frame 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.

KEEPING THE BALANCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH EMMA TWYFORD

INTERVIEW: FLO SCHEIMPFLUG

Photo: David Walther

◆ **Emma Twyford is one of the United Kingdom's leading route setters. Born in 1986, the Welsh native currently resides in Llanberis, the Welsh epicenter of climbing. Emma has many of the hardest – and scariest – trad routes in the UK under her belt. In 2019, she made history with her ascent of *The Big Bang* in Lower Pen Trwyn, becoming the first British woman to redpoint 9a.**

The Big Bang was first ascended by British powerhouse Neil Carson in 1996. It's an ambitious choice for Emma's first 9a – largely because of the relentless stamina needed all the way to the crux, which is not until the very top. After 20 meters of climbing through extremely overhanging terrain, the route suddenly recedes, turning into a slab with significantly slopy holds, posing a challenge both physically and mentally. Added to the fact that its grading is notoriously stiff, it's easy to see why – despite numerous attempts from the UK's strongest climbers – it was another 15 years before it saw another repeat, this time by James McHaffie in 2011. Another eight years passed before Emma successfully clipped the chains on September 17, 2019, after trying the route on and off for two years.

Rock climbing is not the only area where Emma excels, however. She is also one of the UK's top route setters. At first glance, the combination of climbing and route setting looks like a climber's dream, a perfect example of turning a passion into a profession. Though that may be true to a certain extent, reconciling the two isn't always so easy – something Emma has experienced firsthand.

We talk to Emma about her life as a professional climber and route setter and what it takes to keep the balance between the two.

RSM: Most people know you as a top trad and sport climber. But you also have strong ties to indoor climbing and have even competed in the past.

Emma: Yes, that's true! I was ten when I started competing, and by the time I turned 14, I was representing the UK climbing team, something I did until I was 24 – and ten years was long enough for me. I really enjoyed just being outdoors and, after coming down with glandular fever when I was 17, my love for comp climbing never really returned. I carried on competing for a while after that, but haven't done it for some time now. These days I enjoy indoor climbing as part of my training.

RSM: As well as being a professional route setter, you're also a pro-climber. Do climbing and setting complement one another?

Emma: In some ways the two go together very well, but in other ways they don't. In terms of physical fitness, route setting is great for your overall strength and fitness. Being on the ropes can be a good core workout. As far as technique goes, setting can provide some useful input too. When you're testing boulders and routes, you get to try out many different styles of climbing, which helps to improve your overall climbing.

However, dedicating the right amount of time to setting and climbing can be extremely difficult. I try to do a week on and a week off, but then I take as much of the summer off as possible, meaning that I'm very busy in the winter. The main problem with setting is that it usually leaves you too worn out for specific training. After a few days of setting it can take one to two days to recover, depending on the intensity – and my recovery time may be getting longer as I get older.

RSM: With *The Big Bang*, you climbed one of the hardest routes in the UK. How did you manage to balance climbing and route setting when you were attempting it?

Emma: I think trying to keep this balance was the hardest thing about this. I could only plan ahead so far, which involved trying to work out when I could set and when I needed to take time off for the route. Sometimes I would make good progress in bad, humid conditions because I was feeling refreshed, and other times I would struggle in good conditions because I was too tired from five days of setting. This was pretty frustrating. There were some times when I would only have one go because my skin was too thin, and at one point one of my fingers was raw and not healing.

Setting doesn't usually affect my climbing performance too much, but because this route was at my limit it was definitely harder to manage my time and feel fresh enough for the ascent. But it was all part of the process. It took longer than I would have liked but I persevered and my efforts eventually paid off. I got the route done the day before starting some comp setting. I didn't know it at the time, but this was actually my last chance that year, as the weather turned pretty quickly in the fall.

RSM: How did you get into route setting and why?

Emma: I first got into route setting a decade ago, and learned a lot from Rob Napier, a route setter at the Foundry Climbing Centre in Sheffield. I was inspired to give it a go, which was a bit special – at that time there weren't many female setters.

“YOU HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO DO EVERY PART OF THE JOB, NOT JUST THE FUN BITS.”

RSM: Has this changed? How many female route setters are there in the UK?

Emma: That's hard to say. There are definitely more now, partly thanks to the setting workshops I run with Evie Cotrulia, who is also a route setter, through our company Creative Climbing. Altogether, I think that there are still only a handful of freelance female setters, and even fewer female rope setters.

RSM: When did you decide to set professionally?

Emma: Route setting turned into a job for me about nine years ago. Initially I was unsure whether I could make a career out of it, so I worked part time in a couple of gyms until demand increased. I am currently a freelance route setter, mostly working for walls in London, which means I am on the road a lot. About 60% to 70% of my income comes from route setting.

RSM: What do you like most about your profession?

Emma: I love the creativity of route setting. It can be really fun to test and play around with different styles of movement, and the camaraderie within a team makes it a real joy to be at work. But there is also another side to it. Setting is a physically challenging job! It involves lifting big volumes to put them on the walls and moving heavy trays around. Testing boulders is also very intense. And if I set on the ropes, sometimes the bags of holds I'm carrying weigh nearly as much as I do! Hauling them up is hard work. Getting my body up close on a steep wall takes time and effort, and it's usually my neck, shoulders and lower back or glutes that suffer the most.

If you work for five days a week, you can end up feeling broken by the end. This really has an impact on my own climbing. It is difficult to try and tackle a hard project when you are setting so much.

RSM: Do you have any recovery tips?

CBD cream and a hot shower work well for me. Sometimes I do a little stretching but not as much as I should.

RSM: How many days a week do you climb and how many days do you train?

Emma: If I have a setting job that lasts all week, I only get to climb once on the weekend.

During my working days I reduce my training to a quick fingerboard and core session if I feel up to it. When I'm not setting, I train indoors if the weather is bad or climb outdoors three to four times a week if the weather is nice.

RSM: What happens if you cannot balance setting and climbing? Which do you prioritize?

Emma: More often than not, climbing wins, but setting has also had to come first in the past.

I try to be more in control of my calendar now and have learnt to say no, which is tricky when you're self-employed.

RSM: Being a route setter is a dream job for many climbers. What advice do you have for those who want to pursue a career in route setting?

Emma: First of all, it is really important to be honest with yourself about how much you can set and what grade you are comfortable setting up to. Start by getting used to the basics of attaching holds from the ground and then proceed to the rope.

Next, be prepared to put in the work. It's not all glamorous and it's about more than just the setting. You have to be prepared to do every part of the job, not just the fun bits.

RSM: What are your future goals both in route setting and in climbing?

Emma: I'm not getting any younger, so my route setting profession has a shelf life. I'd like to continue setting commercially over the next few years. As I mentioned, my business partner Evie Cotrulia and I have been running setting workshops for women through our company to help more women get into the industry.

In terms of my personal climbing, I have a few goals. It would be great to climb another 9a and maybe find some time to try a 9a+, if I find the right one. I also love traditional rock climbing, but my goals there are a bit more fluid at the moment. For me, it is important to keep the passion and fun alive, which is why I mix up my climbing.

RSM: What do you have your mind on when you are not climbing or setting?

Emma: I'm away a lot with work and climbing and so the thing that is most often on my mind is spending time with my boyfriend, family and friends. I miss them dearly when I'm away so I make sure we have some time together when I'm home. Aside from that, I like to spend my free time doing things such as crocheting or baking, both of which I find therapeutic and relaxing.

RSM: Who has influenced and inspired you in your life, and why?

Emma: I'm lucky to have had so many positive people in my life. I'm thankful to my parents for never being pushy and letting me find my



Emma on The Big Bang (9a/14d) at Lower Pen Trwyn in North Wales



Photo: David Wolhuter

"...IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF ABOUT HOW MUCH YOU CAN SET AND WHAT GRADE YOU ARE COMFORTABLE SETTING UP TO."

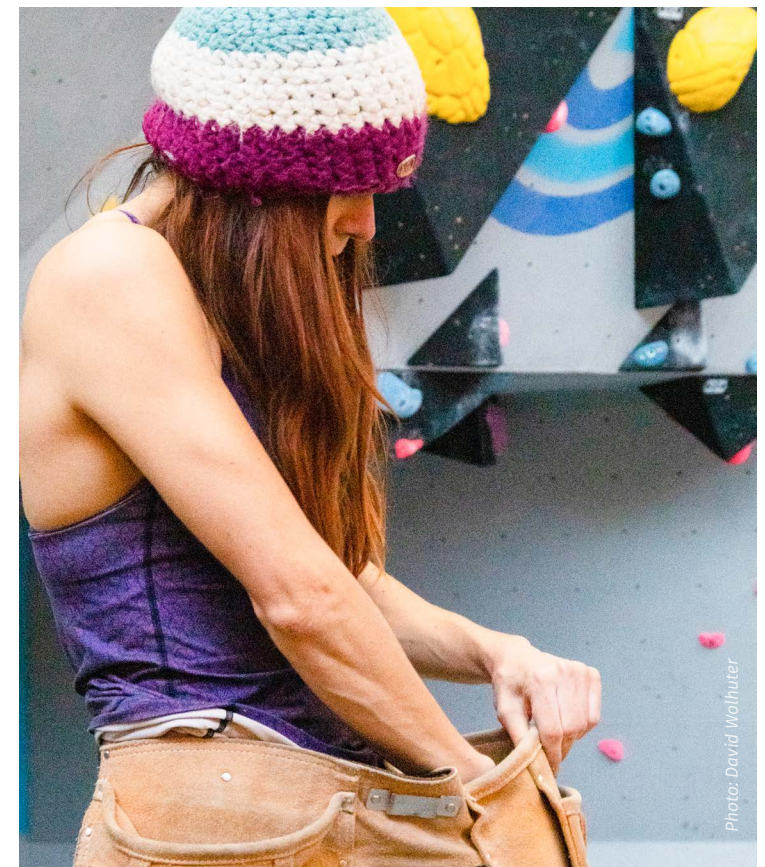


Photo: David Wolhuter

own way. My dad and his friends influenced me from an early age and gave me the love I have for climbing and the outdoors today. As a result I have never gotten bored of it.

James McHaffie, who is one of the leading trad climbers in the UK, has always been a big part of my life as a friend, mentor and climbing partner. He inspired me from a young age and took me under his wing in my early teens. We've now been climbing together for over 20 years and he taught me much of what I know today about trad climbing. What I like most about James, or "Caff" as we like to call him, is that he never once told me I wasn't capable of doing something. He would always give me sage advice, having done so many of the climbs himself already. When I was a teenager he would let me lead a route if I wanted to.

RSM: Do you have any final words of wisdom for our readers?

Emma: Keep the passion and fun alive! Try not to get too frustrated and be kind to yourself when you are tired! When I'm feeling depleted, I drop my level and just go out to have fun. And then, when I'm fresh both mentally and physically, I go harder. For me it is important to take risks but I make sure they are within my limits. It's easy to stay within a comfort bubble but climbing is by its very nature uncomfortable, so I think it's important to try to push yourself and be open to failure. 📌

Photo: Mike Langley



EMMA TWYFORD

Born: 1986

Lives in: Llanberis, Wales

Background: Professional climber, route setter, and coach

The cinderblock-and-wood traversing and bouldering walls at Vertical World, Seattle, in the late 1980s.
Note the board-lasted, high-top rock shoes – state of the art footwear during that era.

**WHAT AN INTEGRAL PART
OF YOUR CUSTOMER BASE –
THE OLD-SCHOOL ROCK CLIMBER –
WANTS YOU TO KNOW**

*SETTING, SHAPING, AND SEQUENCING HAVE CHANGED DRASTICALLY IN
THE PAST DECADE, BUT IS ALL THIS “MODERNIZATION”
LEAVING VETERAN CLIMBERS BEHIND?*

BY MATT SAMET

INTRODUCTION BY JAMES LUCAS

"I'm standing outside Matt Samet's garage east of Boulder, Colorado. I've known Matt awhile. We're both writer/editors in the field of outdoor journalism – he is the former editor of Climbing Magazine – and we've been friends and climbing partners for the past five years. I'm five minutes late for this afternoon's home-wall session, which means that Matt, never known for his patience, has been doing forty-move crimp traverses into his MoonBoard for over an hour. Matt started MoonBoarding in 2019 in his late 40s, looking to disrupt a decline in performance; now, at age 50, he has climbed his hardest sport routes (8c/5.14b) 25 years after doing his first 8b+ (5.14a) in Rifle, Colorado. Tired of the heinous coordination moves at the dozen-odd gyms on Colorado's Front Range, of having to learn new climbing skills that don't directly correlate to his love of crimping, Matt has poured his efforts into building the perfect home dojo. While his home wall has helped him climb harder than ever, he did lose some of the social skills that climbers learn paddle-dynoing with friends at the gym. Training can't be perfect, but Matt works hard at making it better – and he certainly has opinions about how it should be done."



James Lucas is a freelance writer/photographer in Boulder, Colorado.

◆ **To set the scene, I'm 50 years old and have been climbing since the mid-1980s. I'm the poster boy for a "crusty, old-school rock climber"; in fact, I'm so damn salty that when I touch a cucumber, it turns into a pickle. So, as you read on, bear in mind that everything I've written here flows from this perspective.**

I've always primarily been a rock climber, and in my penurious younger years mostly avoided gyms in favor of bouldering circuits on the sandstone blocks of Flagstaff Mountain and long traverses in the Flatirons above Boulder, Colorado. But in the past 15 years,

with a demanding full-time job and, now, three children, I climb on plastic at least two days a week, always with the overall goal of staying fit for outdoor rock climbing. Some of that time is spent on the circuit walls and Grasshopper + 2019 MoonBoard in my garage, and some at the myriad gyms in the Boulder/Denver metro area.

In summer 1988, I visited my first rock gym – which also happened to be America's first commercial rock gym – Vertical World in Seattle, Washington (est. 1987). At that point, "setting" was barely a thing; the gym had little river rocks glued to plywood, edges and pockets drilled out of a cinderblock wall for a tweeky vertical traverse, and, as I recall, one random, prefabricated, bulging boulder that looked like it had fallen off the back of a truck somewhere. The holds never changed. Instead, the front desk had a guidebook to the climbs, all rated on the Yosemite Decimal System or John Gill's B-Scale. Alone in the gym during a midday lull, I walked around with the binder of pages, wading through shredded tire rubber, trying the boulders in hand-me-down Firé boots – the first sticky-soled rock shoes to be sold commercially – sized so big I had to wear wool socks.

Describing Vertical World now, I realize how rudimentary it sounds. If a wormhole had opened that day and carried me 30 years into the future and dropped me in a modern rock gym, I would probably have freaked out: Picture windows? Clean, thickly padded flooring? V grades? Spotify playlists? Monochromatic route setting and ergonomic holds? Routes that change once a month? Volumes? Parkour? Auto belays? Training and route logging? Light-up spray walls? Campus boards? Youth teams? Climbing coaches? An espresso bar?

AAAAAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHH-HHH! It's almost enough to make me lose my marbles!

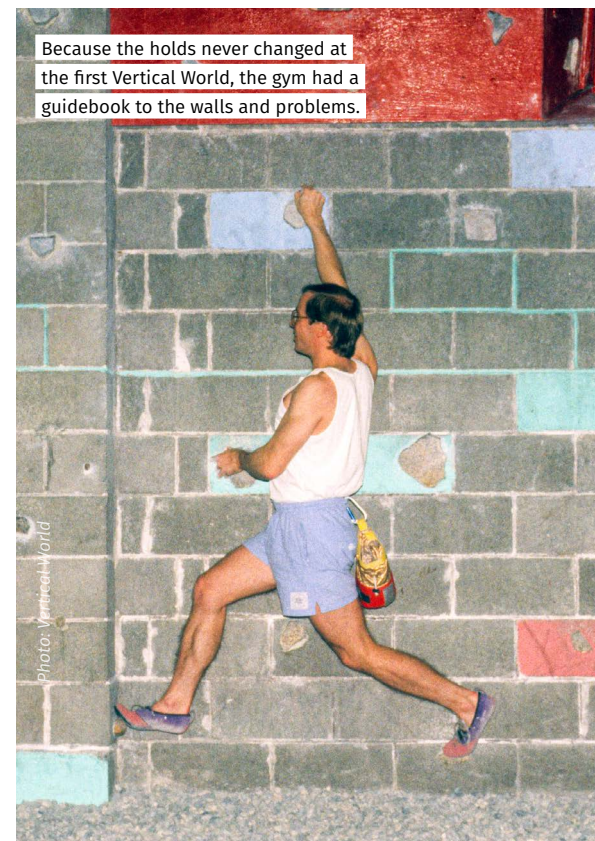
Remember that none of this stuff existed back in the 1980s – with the exception of espresso, although you had to be in Europe to find it. All we sport climbers and boulderers had back then were stiff, high-topped rock shoes, grievous, tweeky vertical climbs, Lycra tights, carpet squares for crash pads, and extreme dieting. So I'm certainly grateful for the modern rock gym and its many improvements. And I certainly don't get nostalgic about the dark, dingy gyms of the 1980s and 1990s that paved the way for today's megaplexes – basically, those gyms sucked. But I do, however, miss old-school setting. In fact, for die-hard rock climbers like me, ones who look at gyms

mainly as a way to stay strong for rock, I'd say that modern setting, with its many bells and whistles, is failing us in ways both big and small. And, at least anecdotally from my time at the gyms on Colorado's Front Range, and from comparing notes with other old-school climbers, I believe I'm not alone.

Sometimes, you just want to climb – to pull down on crimps and make moves – you know? A lot of the things that nowadays seem to be "cool" or even "necessary" in the modern rock gym get in the way of that, and may in fact be alienating an integral part of your customer base, the old-school rock climber. So perhaps it's time for a new evolution, one that reaches back to the past. The following six trends are things I've seen more of in recent years. As purely an end user – a consumer – I've struggled to understand them. And perhaps because they expose my weaknesses, I don't like them. So, I spoke to experienced setter and hold-shaper friends to gain a deeper understanding of how we got here.

1) PARKOUR/COMP-STYLE CLIMBING

How we got here: As parkour has gained popularity as a sport, it's crossed over into climbing, a similarly gymnastic fight with gravity. The parkour setting you see now in gyms evolved from the comp world, in which setters wanted to put on a better show for the audience, with more dynamic, spectacular moves. "It's hard to determine the best climber at a comp through a physical, resistance-type of setting," says Justen Sjong, a climbing coach and former head setter at various gyms, and now the senior director of route setting and



"THOSE OSTENTATIOUS BLOB HOLDS HAVE A COMMUNITY ASPECT TO THEM TOO, AS CLIMBERS CONGREGATE AROUND THEM IN GYMS."

programs at El Cap Holdings, which runs a chain of rock gyms in the United States. "This modern-day setting adds a puzzle-solving aspect while testing a climber's mental strength when they lose their confidence" – as happens, say, when you miss that run-and-jump move for the fifth time and there are only two minutes left on the clock.

There is also the added bonus that big holds – the volumes and blobs found on these problems – are more visible to an audience than smaller grips. "Small holds can provide a more intricate experience," says Jackie Hueftle, former head setter at The Spot gym in Boulder, Colorado, and the co-founder of Kilter Grips and the Routesetting Institute. "But big holds are what spectators can see and understand during an event." And these problems certainly do make for good viewing at events and on Instagram, etc. Plus, the ostentatious holds have a community aspect to them too, as climbers congregate around them in gyms, trying to figure out the beta, taking crazy falls, and pushing each other to make wild, improbable moves.

Youth teams also need these problems to practice for upcoming events, hence their appearance on your local gym's bouldering wall. But the vast majority of climbers are not competition climbers – youth or otherwise – nor will they ever be.

Why I hate it: For climbers like me who want to work power and resistance – and who would rather eat a bag of chalk than film ourselves doing parkour at the gym – these problems are high risk, low reward: risk of injury from missing a move or overloading your shoulders, and low reward for training value, since sequences like these are so rare on rock. I admit that I suck at this style and have put zero effort into improving, but, frankly, it scares me – so I do it sparingly. "Customers can have fun on these climbs if they're well set, meaning they provide appropriate challenges for the ability range they're set for," says Hueftle. The setters will have considered the "risk decisions" that they're asking customers to take at the given grade. So perhaps the risk decisions at my local gyms just aren't appropriate for a 50-year-old who grew up bouldering in the pre-crash pad era, and who shies away from out-of-control bouldering falls.

This would all be fine – to each their own; if I don't want to do these problems, I can just avoid them – if they didn't take up so much real estate. But the massive volumes for just one parkour problem occupy the space for three or four standard boulder problems, reducing density. Plus, the volumes sometimes get in the way on problems set near them, forcing awkward reach-arounds. It is, however, promising that newer gyms are being built with "comp walls" – if you want to run around on plastic blobs like a headless chicken, now there's a wall just for you.

2) GIANT JUGS BLOCKING SMALLER HOLDS ON HARDER PROBLEMS

How we got here: Here's the scenario: One setter sets a hard, crimpy problem using small holds, then another setter will come along and put a jug haul right on top of it. So, Font 4 jugs blocking 7b+ crimps, making the 7b+ basically unclimbable. I had to dig around to figure out why this happens. I thought it was perhaps "deliberately to p*** Matt off," but it turns out that that's not the case. (Who knew?)

Hueftle calls this scenario "poor route-setting management," whether by the gym, the head setter (or lack thereof), or both. "The head setters should be training their setters to see

these interactions and avoid them as much as possible," she says. "This is part of crafting a route-setting program to provide for all the gym's customers." Brent Ng, the head setter at the Boulder Rock Club in Colorado, says it's also often the result of new setters ignoring the terrain they're setting over. "This happens because new setters have tunnel vision – they only have eyes for the thing they are creating," he says. This means that they fail to see the nuances like how their route affects other routes, if the hold color is bad for color-blind people, or if the movement is safe. "Newer setters just don't have the bandwidth to do more than set a route and try to make it 'not bad,'" Ng says.

Why I hate it: I've given up counting how many times I walked away from a problem with small holds because every time I lunged for that key crimp, I had to navigate around some giant blob – or I kept smacking it (it hurts, eh?!). It's like being a kid and your mom has set a bowl of yummy chocolate ice cream in front of you, but then every time you reach for





if she rushes in and blocks it with a plate of Brussels sprouts. Thanks, Mom! A better solution, in my opinion, would be for setters to set the easy problems first, then set the harder problems far away enough to avoid overlap. (Of course, as a customer, your best bet is to complain loudly at the front desk!)

3) SLOPERS – F***ING SLOPERS

How we got here: The proliferation of slopers is tied to the rise in parkour/comp-style climbing; they tend to go hand-in-hand. There is also a visual aesthetic at work: As gyms have moved away from tape toward monochromatic setting, there is pressure or at least a desire to create problems that “have bold, bright colors that pop on the wall to create a product that’s visually stimulating to members,” says Sjong. And what stands out the best? Big, bright, color-matching slopers!

Setters also use slopers to force movement – often there is just one way to grab a sloper, or the options are at least more limited than with a hold you can get your fingers behind. And since setters are working with a deadline (X amount of hours to strip and reset a wall), it can be quicker to slap on a handful of slopers to make a problem difficult, versus tinkering with crimps and techy sequencing.

Why I hate it: At a couple of my local gyms, they’ll often keep grips in rotation until they’re as frictionless as a Teflon skillet. (I did learn that some of this was the result of COVID – one gym was closed for months early in the pandemic, and had to reduce their hold budget.) Meanwhile, with monochromatic setting, says Ng, gyms now have to keep bigger fleets of holds in stock to give them more setting options. This means they hold onto grips for longer, even if the holds have worn down to become textureless, as big slopers have a

tendency to do. “Most of the slopers companies sell are smooth, and their texture wears out after maybe one or two years,” explains Ng. “Holds that only last that long aren’t worth purchasing. It’s something I really wish hold companies would recognize and do something about.” If you have soft, sweaty skin, then you probably won’t notice how slick these slopers are. But if, like me, you have hard, dry skin, you’ll either dry-fire or have to try so much harder that you risk injury.

I’ve taken to carrying a spray bottle of water or using Rhino Spit to prevent this problem – I get my hands wet, to simulate sweat, before I chalk up. But this only works to a degree, and the slicker/slopier the hold, the more I dry-fire. Consider that not all of your customers love slippery, sloping holds, and that many of us who also climb on rock have developed rock-climbing callus that makes our skin dry and leathery. However, fresh, new, and less sloping holds can be grabbed by *everyone*.

4) “CREATIVE” SEQUENCES THAT KIND OF SUCK

How we got here: Gyms are laboratories for setters to experiment with new things – movement and sequences they saw on YouTube or Instagram, simulations of outdoor problems, etc. It’s also here that new setters complete their apprenticeships, trying out different ideas as they hone their craft.

Why I hate it: When route setting gets too creative, incorporating some bizarre, improbable move a setter saw in a comp or on YouTube, the climbs can lose their training value. Ng points out that a good problem or route, regardless of the grade, will have a crux that’s no more than one V grade harder than the rest of the climb, a philosophy that often seems to fall by the wayside with some of these prob-

lems. Personally, I don’t care if I never figure out how to do an overhead double thumb press into a Rose move into a coordination toe hook. It would never happen on rock, it doesn’t make me any stronger, and I’m just not interested in these sorts of shenanigans.

When I come to the gym, I have a limited amount of time to train. I just want to get moves in and get pumped. Maybe my goal for the day is to flash as many problems as I can on the new set, or to do 4-by-4s on problems I already know, or to complete 20 laps on the auto belay. To do this, it’s helpful to have semi-consistent, predictably graded climbs (what Ng calls “flow-style” climbs, analogous to the flow in vinyasa yoga) on which I’m failing due to fatigue or lack of strength, not because I can’t figure out arcane beta. That’s just not what I’m after.

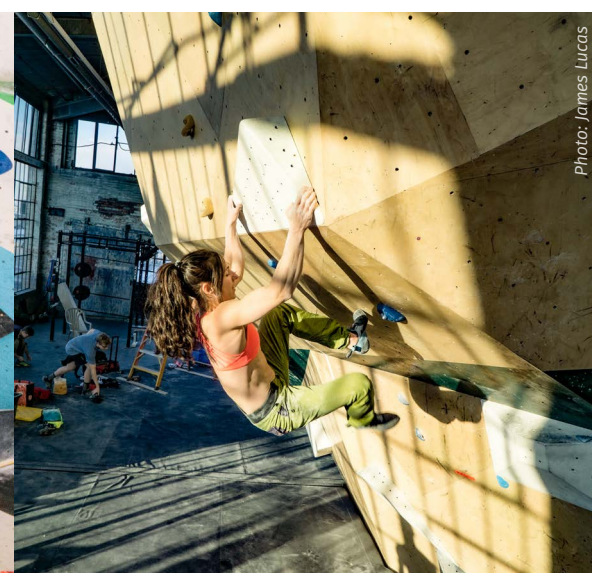
5) A LACK OF FOOTHOLDS

How we got here: I hate to blame the setters, but in this case we probably should – these issues usually come about as a result of poor setting management, whether that be letting tall climbers set only for their height and/or a lack of forerunning to fix such issues.

Why I hate it: For me, standing 5’6” (1.68 meters – shorter than the average American male, who is 5’9” [1.75 meters]), my biggest limiting factor indoors is a lack of footholds. It’s not generally a problem of reach or span; it’s more that if I don’t have anything to push against with my feet, I can’t generate power. So the next move either becomes some ridiculous hand-foot match or a jump, neither of which has much training value or is good for the body when done repetitively.



An example of a creative sequence that likely adds little training value to a gym session.



A lack of footholds = reachy moves and/or shoulder and elbow destruction!

“SETTERS, IT DOESN’T TAKE MUCH: JUST SPRAY ON A FEW EXTRA JIBS, CONSIDERING WHERE CLIMBERS SHORTER THAN YOU MIGHT NEED TO BUILD THEIR FEET.”

If you think I’m just grumbling, consider this: In 2011, Ramón Julián Puigblanque – in freakish form and ranked high in the World Cup circuit – came to Boulder, Colorado, for a lead event at the Movement gym. Standing only 5’3” (1.60 meters), he was routed by a giant dyno on the men’s finals route. In a rage, Puigblanque left for Rifle, Colorado, where he onsighted Living in Fear (8b, but really it’s 8b+) and The Crew (8c+), the latter being only the third onsight of the grade in the world and 11 years later still the hardest onsight in the canyon by far. So, there you have it: a simple reach/lack-of-footholds issue that shut down one of the world’s best rock climbers, who probably would have otherwise crushed the event.

Setters, it doesn’t take much: Just spray on a few extra jibs, considering where climbers shorter than you might need to build their feet, and the problem is solved – almost always without changing the grade.

6) NO TWO-HANDED SHAKEOUTS ON LEAD ROUTES

How we got here: In the early days, gyms were short – like 20 to 25 feet (approx. 6 to

7.5 meters) high – because they were built inside existing spaces like warehouses or light-industrial buildings. So you had small walls on which, in order to milk any difficulty, every move had to be stout, with nowhere to shake out.

At my home gym, the Boulder Rock Club, originally built in the 1990s before the age of mega-gyms, the routes are still short. Ng, the head setter there, says: “The reason I don’t put a comfortable resting jug at every clip is due to route length. Outdoor sport routes tend to be 50 to 100 feet (15 to 30 meters) long; in our gym, we have 30 to 35 feet (9 to 10.5 meters) of climbing real estate. If I put a jug at every clip on [the gently overhanging] Mary Beth Wall, you’d have a 5.10/5.13 route of two extremes, with a heinous crimp in between each jug.”

The influence of comp-style climbing is a factor as well: Look at any World Cup event, and the lack of two-handed shakes and progressive build in difficulty. Setters might emulate this for their own creative reasons, or to provide training climbs for their youth teams. Hueftle also speculates that this style is a form of customer management: Think of those endless endurance routes you find outside, and how long you’re on the rock on a redpoint, shaking out and resting: perhaps up to 45 minutes. If this were also happening inside, the walls would get jammed up.

Why I hate it: These days, new gyms are being constructed in purpose-built shells with way more vertical height, allowing for climbs as long as you might find at any respectable crag – sometimes 10 or 12 bolts long. And yet, setting that precludes proper, two-handed shakes still predominates. My experience with this resistance style is that it pumps me out way too much, and in so doing doesn’t help to build fitness. I just get so flamed my mouth starts to foam like I’m a rabid dog and my hands open, then I fall and need way too long to rest – way longer than on the more natural, recover-on-the-wall style found outside. And I’ve lost track of the number of times I simply jumped off rather than pull up rope for a clip that was just as hard as, if not more difficult than, a gym route’s crux.

I bring this up because I have seen that the story can be very different – that power-endurance sprinting need not be the only way to bake in difficulty. A few years back at the Boulder Rock Club, a setter put an 8a/+ on yellow holds up an overhanging prow in the back room. Plastic climbs come and go, so the fact that I remember this one should tell you just how good it was. The climb, so atypically

for the gym, had a two-handed shake on a big, incut layback volume at two-thirds height. The hold gave you a target to aim for as you fought your way through the tough lower sequences, then a rest before the upper crux on slopers and crimps. It was genius, a delight, a true pleasure to climb on.

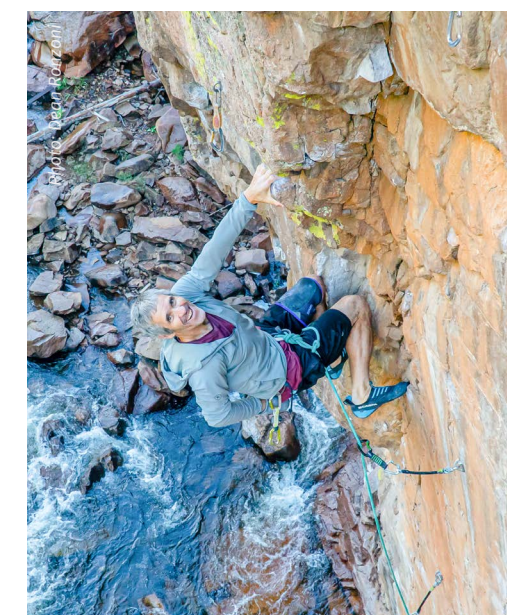
In fact, I was so stoked with this climb that I asked Mike, the gym’s manager, who had set it. I wanted to pay the setter, who turned out to be Wes Fowler, a compliment the next time I saw him. And while Wes is half my age (and stands nearly a foot taller), he’s more of a rock guy himself too. “You totally nailed it,” I told Wes when I saw him at the gym. “If this was outdoors, it would be one of the best routes in Colorado.”

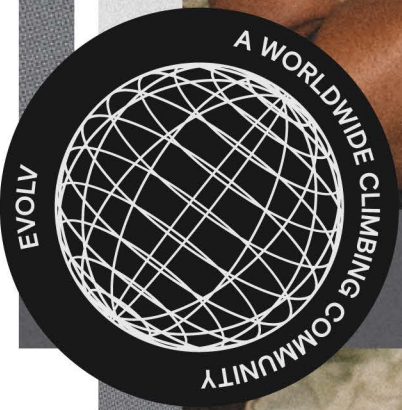
“Thanks, man,” he said. “I appreciate it.”

I stand by that assessment today: A little craft goes a long way, and for my money the closer you can get to simulating the flowy movement and organic recovery stances you find on the best outdoor rock climbs, the better. Not all gym customers are teens and 20-somethings who want to bounce around on slopers and blobs or pump out on power-endurance sprints – and, in any case, we’re all aging. In another decade or two, these kids may even be as crusty as me. 🍷

Matt Samet is a freelance writer and editor based in Boulder, Colorado, where, the older and surlier he gets, the more he prefers to train in the gym in his garage.

Pictured below: Matt on his new route, Reservoir Dogs (14a), at the River Wall, Button Rock Reservoir in Lyons, Colorado.





All Around Collection

BUILT FOR PROGRESSION

PERFORMANCE COLLECTION

A NEW WAY TO DRAW YOUR OWN LINES



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ROUTE SETTER
magazine

PHOTO
CONTEST
2022



RSM PHOTO CONTEST 2022

ARTISTS AT WORK

◆ *This year's Route Setter Magazine Photo Contest gave us the opportunity to honor route setting not only as a profession but as a craft. To see the walls and possibilities of movement through the artists' eyes, and to experience their creations in the way they intended us to.*

We're delighted to showcase a selection of photos entered into the contest. We'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who voted for their favorite photos, and to the judges who brought their expertise to the panel. Most of all, thank you to the contestants who took the time to participate and share their art with us all. We hope you enjoy the gallery. ◆

JUDGES' PANEL:



JAMES LUCAS
Freelance writer & photographer
◆ Boulder, Colorado



SARAH BURMESTER
Editor at Klettern Magazine,
movement coach & routesetter
◆ Stuttgart, Germany



CLAUDIA ZIEGLER
Photographer
◆ Torren, Austria



FLO SCHEIMPFLUG
Climbing journalist
◆ Salzburg, Austria

1ST PLACE

ROUTESETTING IS THE NEW FASHION
Aurèle Brémond

◆ Climbing District, Paris, France

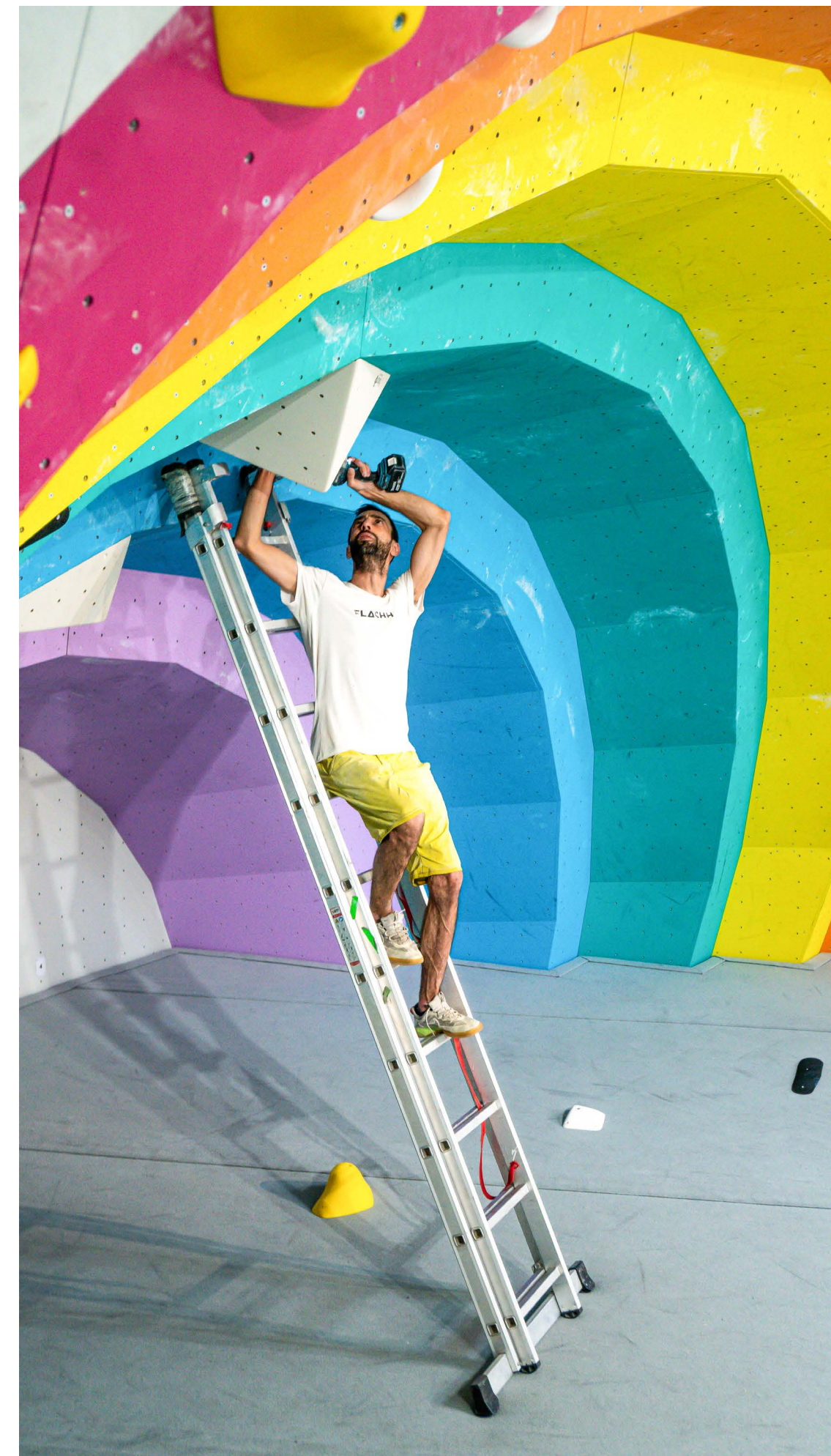




2ND PLACE

MASTER OF THE UPSIDE DOWN
Erica Taylor

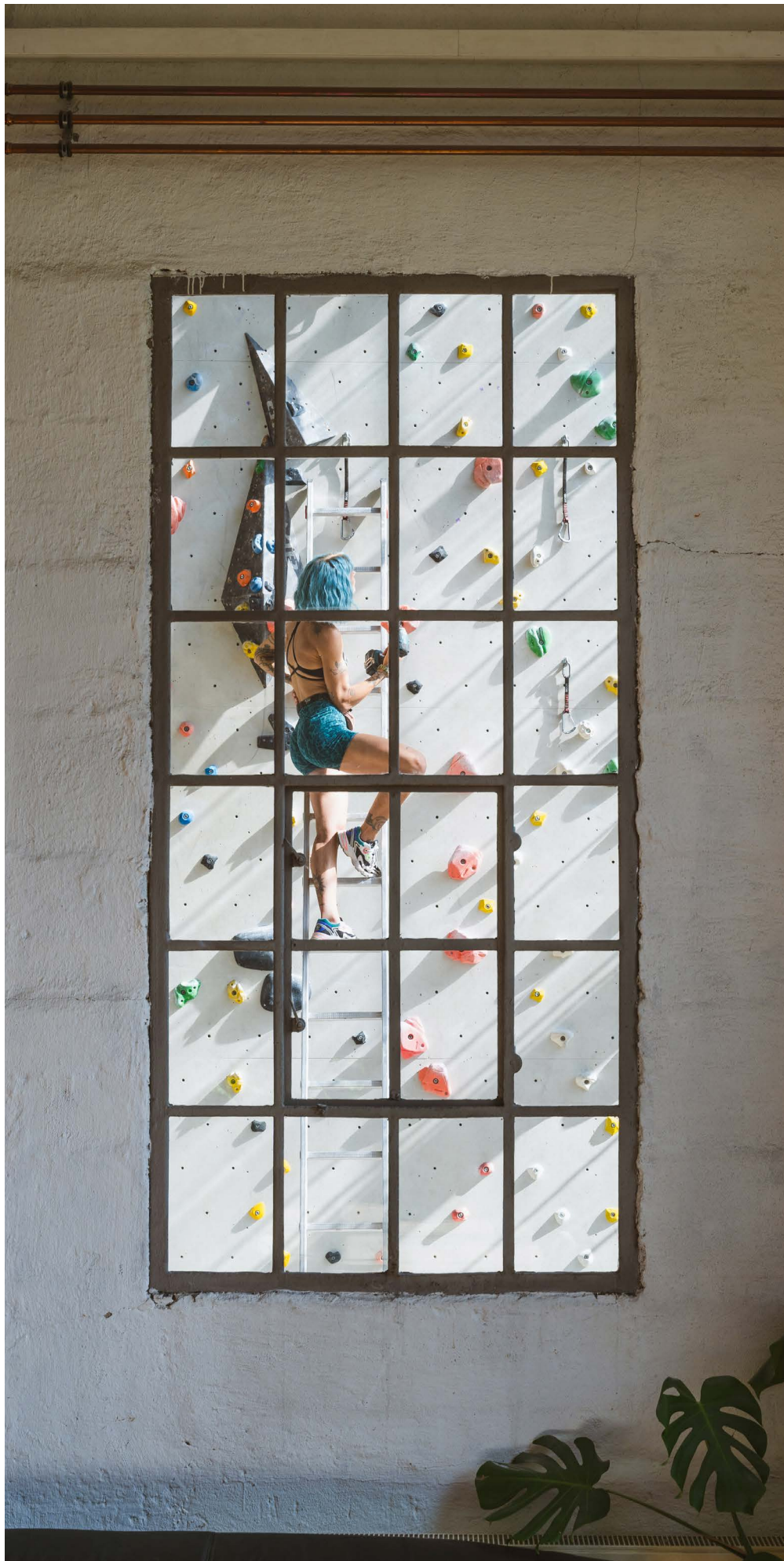
📍 The Boardroom, Flintshire, North Wales, UK



3RD PLACE

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW IS A BIG JUG
Henry Heinemann

📍 Flashh, Barcelona, Spain



CROWD FAVORITE

WINDOWSTILL
 Niklas Höllmer
 📍 Kletterwerk, Lübeck, Germany



A DARK STORAGE ROOM
 Masayuki Nagata
 📍 Maboo Climbing Gym, Tokyo, Japan



THE FINISHING TOUCH
 Shae Y
 📍 Lighthouse Climbing, Singapore

📍 The Boardroom, Flintshire, North Wales, UK



PSICOBLOC TWEAKS
 Erica Taylor



ARTIST & PAINTBRUSH
Sim Warren

📍 Boulder Brighton, Brighton, England



ISAAC PALATT SETTING AT THE SPOT LOUISVILLE
Patrick Bodnar

📍 The Spot Climbing Gym, Louisville, CO, USA

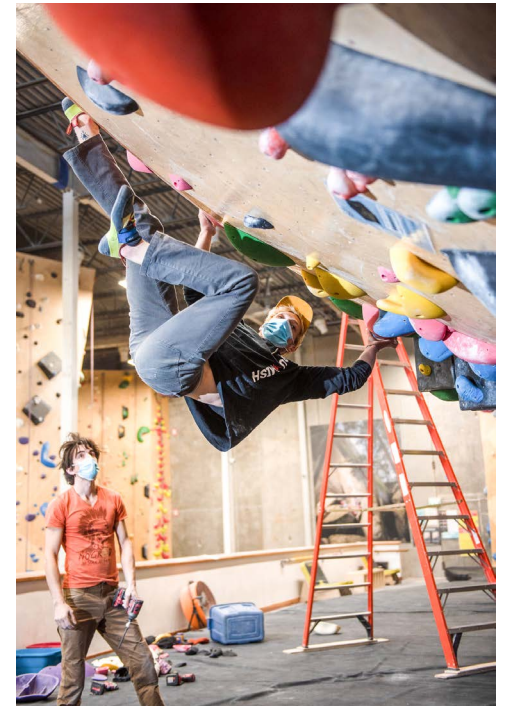


VISUALIZE IT!
Niklas Höllmer

📍 Flensbloc, Flensburg, Germany

BATHANG FORERUNNING
Jake Scharfman

📍 Ground Up Climbing Centre, Squamish, Canada



ROUTESETTER
Julieta Carrillo

📍 Crux Climbing Center, Austin, TX, USA



VIAFERRATA
Matthias Woidneck

📍 Boulderhalle E4, Nuremberg, Germany

SYSTEMS
Alexi Papp

📍 East Peak Climbing, Halifax, Canada



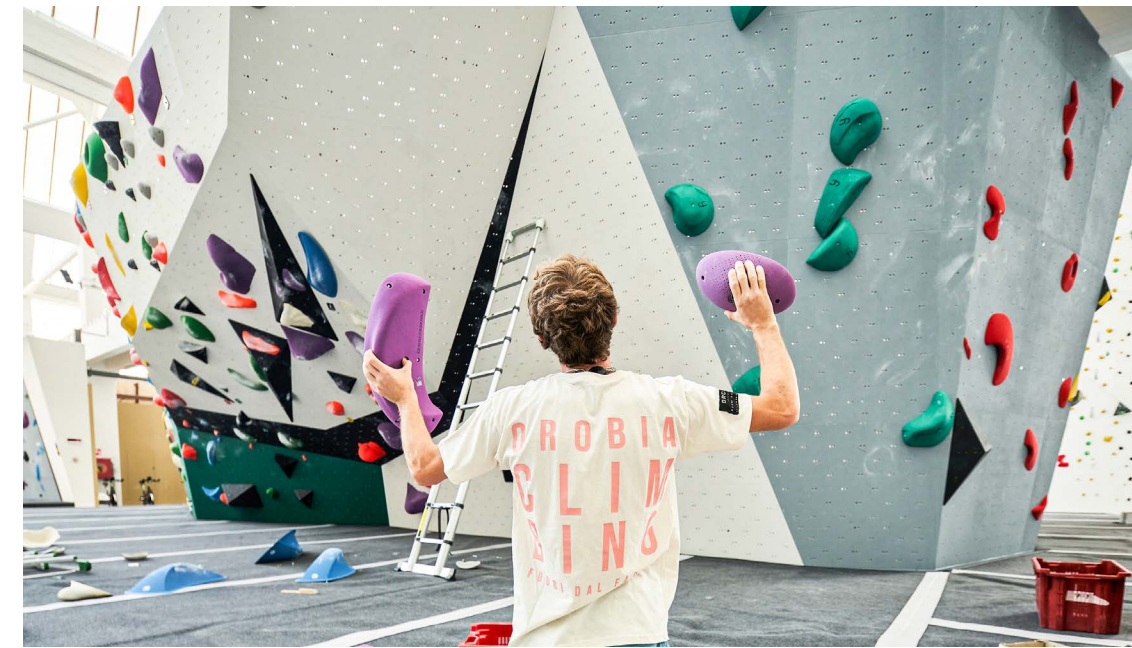
VOLUMEN PARTY
Pavlo Vekla

📍 Blockhaus



LUCA CAIMANNI
Gianmarco Dodesini Valsecchi

📍 Orobias climbing, Bergamo, Italy



CROWD FAVORITE

ASTRAL PROJECTION INITIALIZED
Aleef Shazali

📍 Bolder Ventures, Subang Jaya, Malaysia



MIND GAMES
Aurèle Brémond

📍 Climbing District, Paris, France





A GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE...
Sim Warren

📍 Boulder Brighton, Brighton, England



HANG ON THERE!
David Schickengruber

📍 City Adventure Center, Graz, Austria



FRESH HOLDS
Brent Spillane

📍 Climb Base5, North Vancouver, Canada



PEACE IN CHAOS
Patricia Valero Mayo

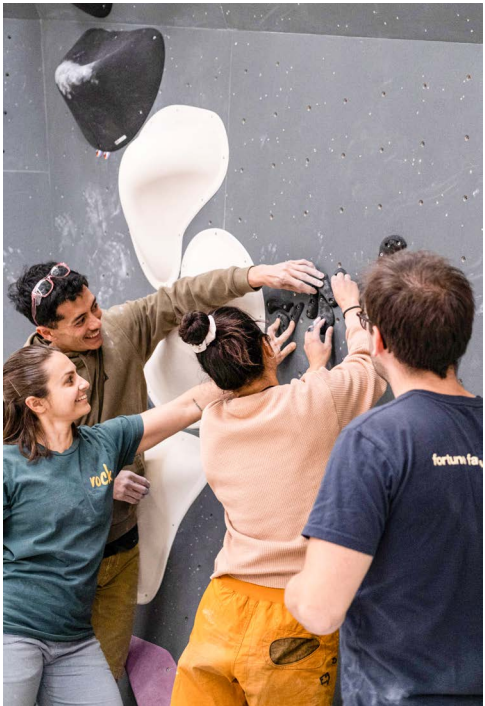
📍 Madrid



CROWD FAVORITE

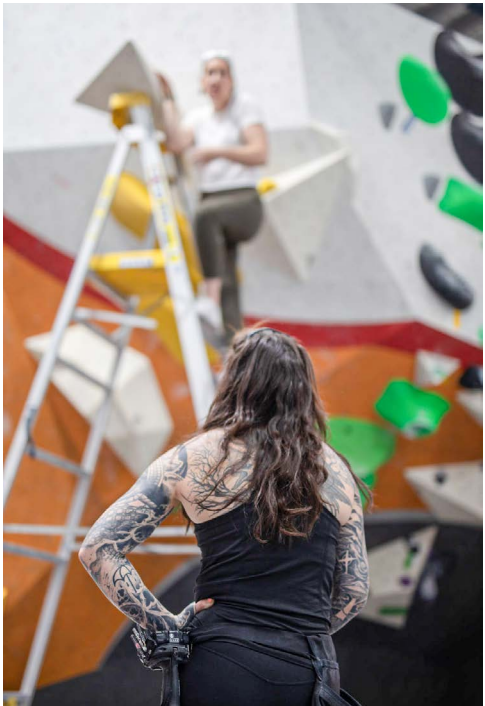
ROUTE SETTING NEEDS MORE DIVERSITY
Nora Caterin Born

📍 Kosmos, Leipzig, Germany



TEAM DECISIONS
Izzy Huang

📍 BlocHaus Marrickville, Sydney, Australia



SYNERGY
Tara Davidson

📍 Nomad, Sydney, Australia



THE VIEW FROM THE ROOF
Masayuki Nagata

📍 Maboo Climbing Gym, Tokyo, Japan



EDELRID 

EXPERIENCE VERTICAL FREEDOM! ROUTE SETTING WITH EDELRID

For over 150 years, EDELRID is constantly developing innovative climbing equipment. It's the company's vision to turn ideas into reality to allow free movement in the vertical world. Discover the latest products of EDELRID – especially selected for route setters, developed in Germany.

MEGAWATT € 190 (available from December 2022)

The new MEGAWATT is the most versatile descender device on the market with maximized compactness and minimized weight. This descender device is also for industrial climbing and rescue use. Its special lever geometry allows a large transmission ratio and an extremely wide working range. At the same time, its anti-panic feature reduces the risk of an accident in the event of loss of control. It is suitable for left and right-handed users and enables optimal handling even in working positions that are difficult to access.



FUSE € 210 & DEFUSER L € 45 (both available from April 2023)

The FUSE sets new standards for guided type fall arresters. Whether ascending or descending, the integrated centrifugal brake enables the device to move up/down the belay rope with incomparable ease from the very first meter.

The mandatory combination with a shock absorber like DEFUSER L makes it possible to select a complete system.



SPOC € 70

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



SWITCH PRO ADJUST

120 cm € 85 | 200 cm € 90 | 300 cm € 95
New, easy to use, length-adjustable lanyard for self-belaying, positioning, and progression on structures, anchor points, or railing ropes, or when climbing ropes. The system consists of the popular PERFORMANCE STATIC 10.5 mm, an OVAL POWER TRIPLE LOCK CARABINER, and the innovative rope clamp. This enables length adjustment even under load – allowing the lanyard to be shortened or lengthened at any time!



SETTER BAG € 90

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.

Internal dims.: 630 x 420 x 300 mm

The SETTER BOX matches perfectly with the SETTER BAG for storing small spare parts and tools.



FLASK € 20

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.



BEAKER € 50

Robust bag made of abrasion-resistant canvas material for transport and organization of tools and equipment. The BEAKER is reversible so that the inside pockets can be used as side pockets. The wide lid for easy access is improved with an embedded magnet to keep it secured in windy situation.



GRIP GLOVE € 4.50

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®.



TOOL SAFETY LEASH € 32

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. For gear only – not PPE.



ALL THAT YOU NEED FOR ROUTE SETTING

At SINGING ROCK we make products for your vertical world. We bring simplicity, honesty and fairness to climbing and working at heights. We are climbers who create for climbers. We put not only our experience but also our passion into our products for climbing and working at heights. The combination of climbing and work at height experience and passion, allows us to bring you the most suitable gear for your route setting job. We create our products in the Czech Republic since 1992.



ROOF MASTER
Lightweight and fully adjustable full body harness. The unique Singing Rock **MOTION SYSTEM** gives the user freedom of movement without being restricted by a working rope or a fall arrest system. It allows the perfect foothold placement without limiting the route setter movement. The ideal solution for working at heights where precise positioning and free movement are important.



FRANKLIN
Work positioning seat with maximum load 250 kg intended for use with fall arrest or work positioning harnesses. Easily adjustable with patented **Rock&Lock** buckles. Wide sitting area ensures good stability and allows comfortable route setting even in 45° overhangs.



HEX
Durable, fully ventilated helmet for climbing and other rope activities. Durable EPP+ABS shell protects against falling objects and guarantees a high degree of protection against impact force, including repeated impact force. The "OPEN CELL" construction with 35 ventilation holes with a total area of 108 cm² guarantees maximum ventilation in the hottest days in the gym. Available in two sizes (M 52/58cm a L 55/61cm) and 5 colors.



STATIC R44 11.00 MM
Excellent quality static rope with patented rope-braiding technology ROUTE 44 intended for rope access, work positioning, rescue or manipulation with the objects. Sheath is braided more densely which provides better protection of the core against dirt and dust. Rope is running smoother through belay/rapel devices with lower risk of core prolapse through the sheath when is bent over small diameters.



SIR
Robust and compact multipurpose device. Its functionality spans the range from rope descender and abseiling device through semi-automatic belay and fall-arrest device to work positioning device. Metal lever under all industrial conditions is tested for 225 kg according to EN 12841.



LIFT
Hand ascender for safe and smooth ascent with a trigger for a short descent mode. Extra wide handle and attachment point for two carabiners will fit everyone from bigwall climbers to workers at height or route setters. Available in two variants – for the left and right hand.



LOCKER
Guided type fall arrester and work positioning device. By its various use and perfect functionality, LOCKER has become the common device for every worker at height.



JOULE 70
Fall absorber for securing persons working on horizontal constructions and high lift platform. Suitable with the LOCKER fall absorber, for working situations which require longer distance from the safety line.



TWISTER
Rotating anchor device to prevent twisting the boxes with the holds. Ball bearing allows rotation up to 4 kN load (≈ 400 kg).



OXY TRIPLE LOCK
Hot-forged light alloy oval carabiner designed to be used especially with pulleys, ascenders and descenders. On the locking sleeve there are rough notches for easy manipulation. Each carabiner is individually tested for a strength of 10 kN.



TOOLKIT
Special bag to carry fasteners and tools for route setting. Made of the high resistant and durable POLYMAR fabric. Intended to be attached to the harness via carabiners or directly to the user using an additional belt. Number of holders and closable pockets for tools and fasteners.



CARRY BAG
Practical bag intended for storage and transport of ropes, holds and other gear. Made of durable and washable material. Textile reinforcements keep the bag self-standing. Reinforced handle to haul the bag. Textile handle on the bottom to shake out the gear and dirt.



MEET THE NEW ROUTESETTING SHOES BY THE NORTH FACE - EXCLUSIVELY AT BERGFREUNDE.DE

After five decades on the crag, The North Face continues to embrace innovation in the world of climbing. This is made evident by the limited edition Routesetter, made in collaboration with internationally renowned route-setter Tonde Katiyo. Katiyo is famous for his unique perspective, that one should “reveal the aesthetics in holds and move-

ments” when it comes to setting routes. As a result, these shoes boast a special design that combines the best of everyday, comfortable sneakers with climber-specific features. The shoes are sold within Europe exclusively by Bergfreunde, who are experts in everything related to climbing and the outdoors.



THE LARIMER LACE FROM THE NORTH FACE

This shoe represents a new breed of everyday sneaker that incorporates the aesthetics and construction of climbing and bouldering shoes. This makes them ideal for climbing purposes, while equally suitable for wearing on your bike, around town or even in the office.



THE DANKYU PRO X KATIYO FROM THE NORTH FACE

A climbing shoe/sneaker hybrid that combines the essential elements of both worlds, making it perfect for indoor climbers and professionals in bouldering and climbing, as well as for route builders who want to try out their own creations without changing shoes.





GESHIDO

The Geshido is built with a single layer vegan synthetic upper, which will keep the shoe feeling tighter and more powerful. The Geshido has a 2 strap hook and loop closure system for easy on and off. Equipped

with a full-length plastic midsole that will ensure that you have enough power to drive through small features and provide confidence during technical sequences from hard vertical to moderately overhanging.



GESHIDO MEN'S



GESHIDO WOMEN'S

DRAW YOUR OWN LINES

The Geshido Family was 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 single layer leather upper paired with the lace closure system will allow the Geshido Lace

to mold to your foot giving you that perfect custom fit. A full-length plastic midsole will ensure that you have power to for small features and provide confidence during technical sequences.



GESHIDO LACE MEN'S



GESHIDO LACE WOMEN'S



Explore the EVOLV LOOKBOOK here



COLLECTOR CHALK BAG



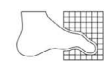
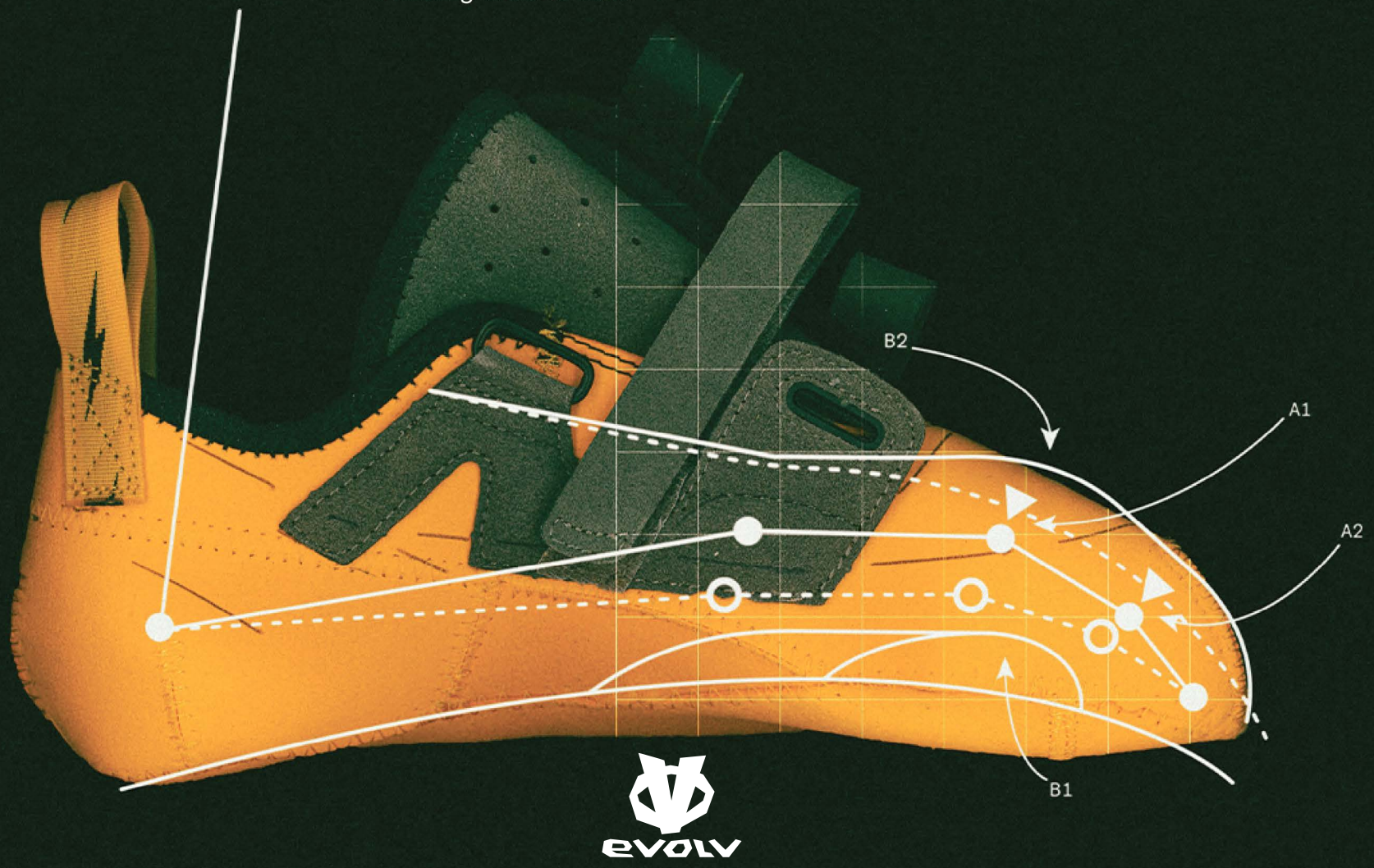
BODEGA CHALK BAG



BODEGA CHALK BAG

EVOLAB

Developed in our Evolutionary Laboratory (EvoLab), Evolv Technologies exist for one singular reason: To create the highest performing, most comfortable climbing shoe to date.



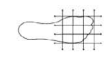
(1) ToeBox Technology

Power and comfort where the rubber meets the rock.



(2) Traction - TRAX Rubber

Traction you trust from the stickiest s#!t in climbing.



(3) Volume Based Fit

The easiest way to get a shoe that fits.



Explore the EVOLV LOOKBOOK here



www.evolvsports.com



IT'S ABOUT PROGRESSION

Twenty years ago, Evolv began as a vision for climbing's progressive future and a small crew of Southern Californian climbers built Evolv into a creative force. We've collaborated with our generation's best climbers and made shoes that climbed the world's hardest problems —always with a scrappy, inventive approach.

A lot has changed since we started out. Climbing gyms have reshaped the sport and culture of climbing. We are meeting a new kind of climber at the gym. Evolv itself has grown, with new partnerships that allow us to amplify what we do to a global audience.

Today, 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 together. Let's Go.



Explore the EVOLV LOOKBOOK here



ShamanCollection

SHOP THE ALL NEW 2022 SHAMAN COLLECTION



www.evolvsports.com

SHAMAN LACE



SHAMAN LACE



SHAMAN LACE LV

The Shaman Lace was designed for the climber that has one thing in mind: edging power. The structure of the vegan synthetic upper and stiff heel rand forces your toes forward into a power position creating a shoe that begs to stand on small features on a steep face. The asymmetric lacing system provides a custom fit for a wide variety of foot shapes.

Available in Medium and Low Volume for a perfect, custom fit.

SHAMAN

The Shaman is a modern cambered shoe designed for the climber who challenges themselves with different types of climbing. Equally home on overhanging gymnastic and steep routes that require precise footwork. The vegan synthetic upper built on an aggressively profiled last

ensures your foot is always in a power position and the shoe will not stretch too much over time.

Available in Medium and Low Volume for a perfect, custom fit.



SHAMAN



SHAMAN LV



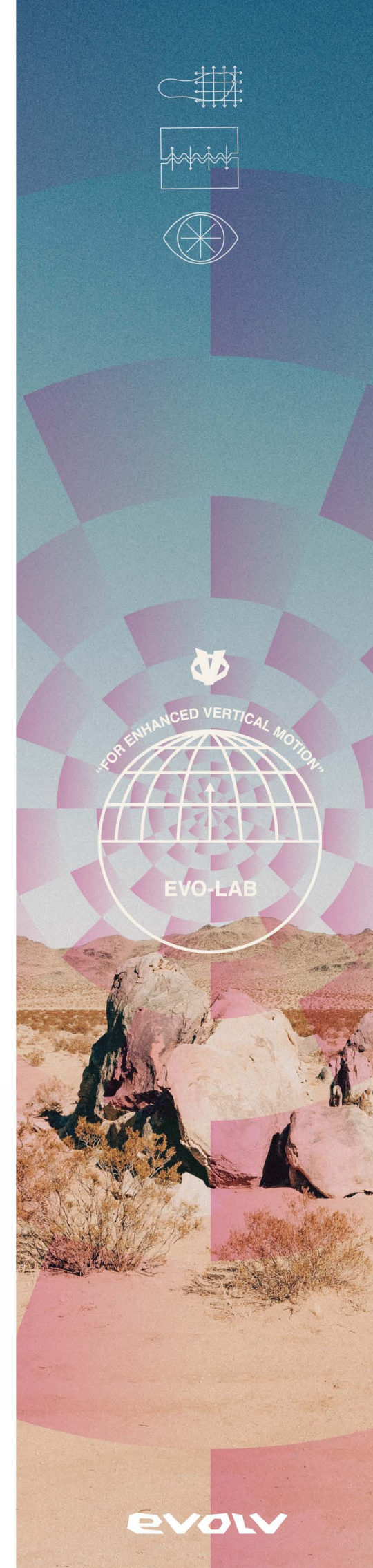
REFILLABLE CHALK BALL



COLLECTOR CHALK BAG



COLLECTOR CHALK BUCKET





AGRIPP GAVA

A best-selling range with 30 sets in XXL formats.

You will be immediately seduced by their voluptuous shapes and innovative textures. This new ergonomic range offers tremendous comfort for all climbing styles.



AGRIPP DUAL

The reference in the climbing hold market.

Over 60 sets of grips, with 9 new sets coming in 2023.



AGRIPP A WIDE SELECTION OF GRIPS FOR MAGNIFICENT ROUTES. PRESENT AT EUROPEAN, ASIAN AND WORLD CUPS CHAMPIONSHIPS.

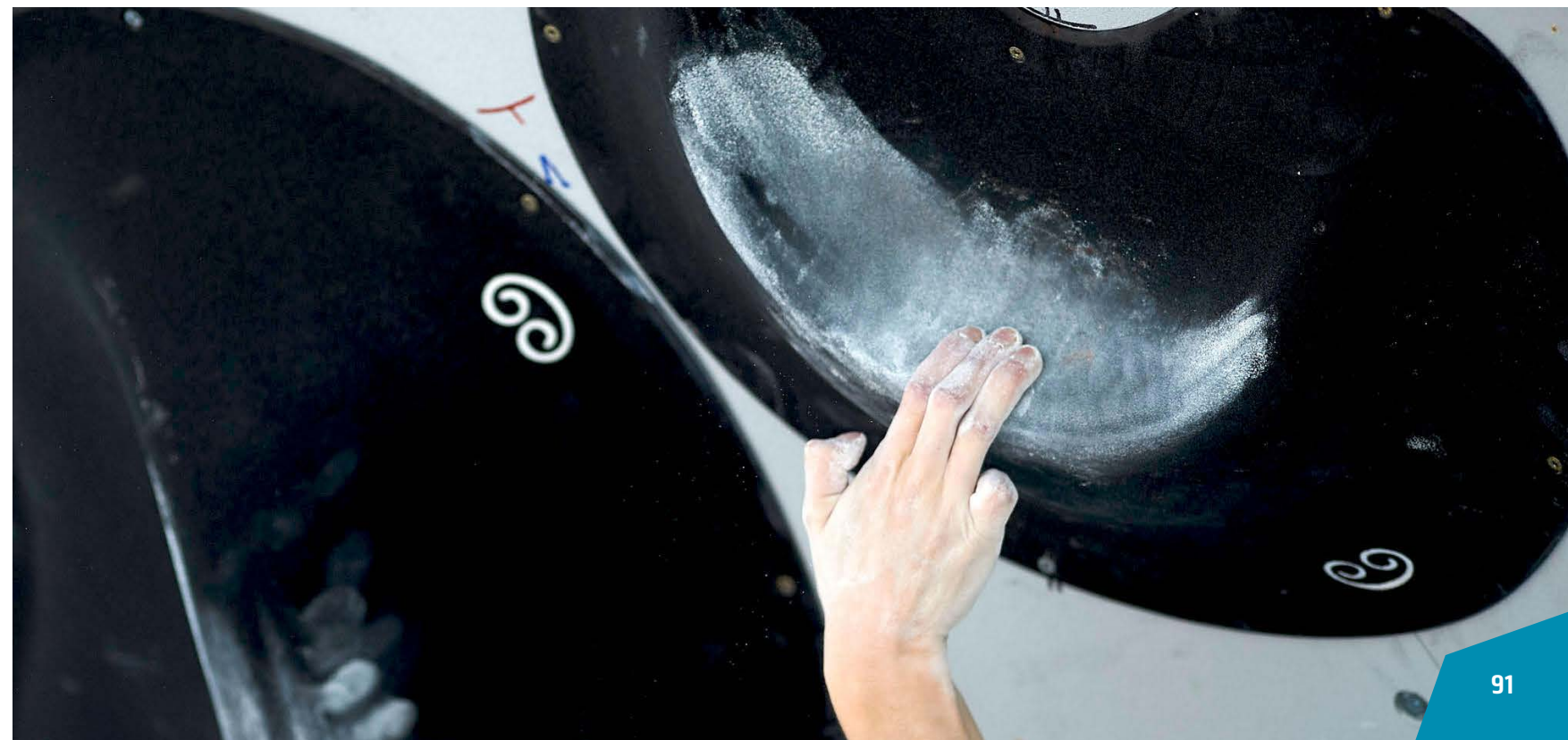
AGRIPP is a worldwide, market leading brand. Olympic brand since 2021 in MACRO category. IFSC partner since 2015. AGRIPP will spoil you with options.



AGRIPP MACROS

Twenty-two new models of the T22 series delivered this year. The innovative designs and remarkable quality unlock new possibilities in movement and creativity.

Our new range is designed for all climbing and boulder gyms. We offer a unique double texture option with 11 RAL and 4 FLUO colors on the entire Macros range.





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blue pill

holds · volumes · equipment

www.bluepill-climbing.com

BLOCZ – BECAUSE WE CARE



USA CLIMBING
HOLD & VOLUME
SUPPLIER

Bloz unites gym owners, manufacturers of bouldering products and passionate climbers under one roof. This allows us to understand the needs and wishes of our customers from different perspectives. With direct feedback from the bouldering gyms, we are always creating new, distinctive designs and constantly developing the quality and durability of our products.

OUR MACRO VOLUMES – 100 % RECYCLED PLASTIC

Last year, Bloz became the first manufacturer in the world to successfully create a macro volume, whose base body is made out of 100% recycled industrial waste and is completely reusable. Everything under the visible coating is industrial waste, which we breathe new life into. Above that, we're also doing a lot of other things, when it comes to sustainability.



BLOCZ AS PRODUCER

Bloz is the producer of holds, wood volumes and macro volumes for Blue Pill, Unit Holds, Chapter Climbing, CCE and the Bloz products themselves. Brands that inspire us with their own unique approach to climbing, and whose design ideas and finishes enrich our own portfolio. Conversely, the products we manufacture benefit from the proven Bloz quality.



Community
Climbing
Equipment



THE BLOCZ SERVICE VARIETY

WALLS

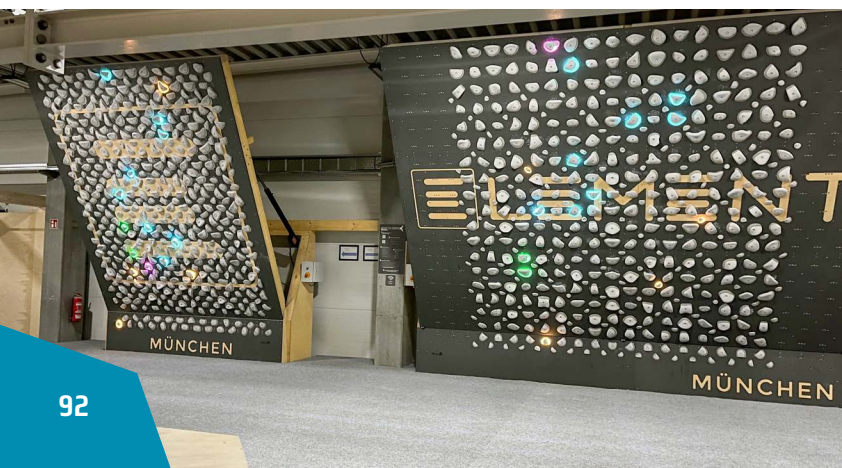
Together we plan your unique wall design and build on site our wall construction

MATS

We offer boulder mats with carpet or PVC top.

KILTER BOARD FRAME

Something special and NEW from the Bloz production! We build Kilter Board frames from wood. No matter if homewall or original layout, we offer the proper size for you.



BLUEPILL – BETWEEN MANUAL LABOR AND DIGITAL CREATION



USA CLIMBING
HOLD & VOLUME
SUPPLIER

We as bluepill have a wide range of PU grips, PE grips and volumes, this includes among others wooden volumes. With the new development of our volumes made of recycled material, we were able to get rid of fiberglass volumes altogether, which brings a big step further in the direction of sustainability.

IMPOSSIBLES – handshaped new line

In the new development of our products, we still rely on handwork. We feel the shapes that are being created and are able to directly address ergonomics in the development process to produce unique and easy to climb holds and volumes.

The new impossible series features minimally curved edges that create a certain tension in the look.



PILLS – digital created new line

On the other hand, we are of course also attracted by the possibilities of digital creation. With the help of 3D programs and 3D printers, new models are created that serve as the basis for new series.

The simple basic shape of the pills offers an unimagined variety of combination possibilities. They come as popular dual textures.



www.community-climbing.com



www.kletterkultur.com

COMMUNITY CLIMBING EQUIPMENT – CCE

Equipment made by the community, for the community. Community Climbing Equipment offers equipment, tools and everything related to climbing. The goal is to offer a complete package for route setters, gym owners, gym managers and home wall owners to simplify processes efficiently and to guarantee ideal equipment.

NEW WOODEN HOLDS

Two different wooden hold lines, each with a selection of small to large shapes, are available as a blank or in dual texture. The dual texture holds are ideal as a beautiful highlight grip set in bouldering and climbing gyms. Manufactured as standard in black or white, they can be easily bolted and integrated alongside conventional materials in the regular system.



WE OFFER YOU

ROUTESETTER TOOLS

All kind of tools for machines and manual work to make your work life easier, like our new duo star bit called "magic bit".



TRAINING EQUIPMENT

Stylish hang boards and push bars for your training.



HOME WALL EQUIPMENT

Prefabricated wall panels, t-nuts, screws, extra hold sets which are perfectly designed for home walls.



kletterkultur – SERVICE FOR BOULDERING- & CLIMBING GYMS

The "Kletterkultur" has years of experience in the planning of climbing gyms, route setting, the sale of climbing gym products and the transfer of knowledge through workshops, this allows the best service. Our in-house exhibition "Hold Together" this summer offered many lectures and exchange with each other, which many of you appreciate very much.

HOLD TOGETHER

The Hold Together is a B2B event organized by Kletterkultur for owners or operators of climbing/bouldering gyms as well as for route setters. The focus is on the exchange with each other, with our brands and manufacturers as well as interesting lectures. Next year we will again offer two days of program at its best. You are welcome to contact us.



OUR SERVICES

In cooperation with Blocz we make your wall & mat dreams come true for your climbing gym. We are the exclusive distributor for grips and volumes in Germany, Austria and Switzerland for several popular brands. We offer a wood-friendly and thorough cleaning of your climbing wall and also have the right cleaning system for holds and volumes for you.



CLIMBING GYM HEAVEN

Climbing Gym Heaven is a platform dedicated to all gym climbers, routesetters, managers, and owners. We provide a wide range of products and services beyond climbing walls – like flooring, macros, volumes, and other training accessories from the best brands in the business.

At climbing Gym Heven, you will find a large variety of some of the best brands of climbing holds, macros, volumes, such as **Illusion**, **Infinity** and **Climb 1**.

And if you are looking for safety matting the **Citymat** brand is the answer for you

Contact us at info@climbinggymheaven.com

www.climbinggymheaven.com



Photo: Grega Valančič



NEW OVAL CONE MACROS COLLECTION

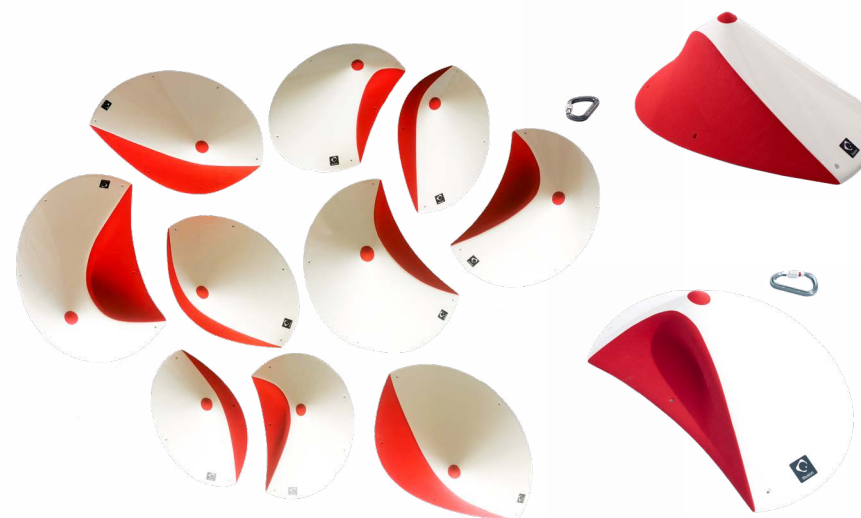
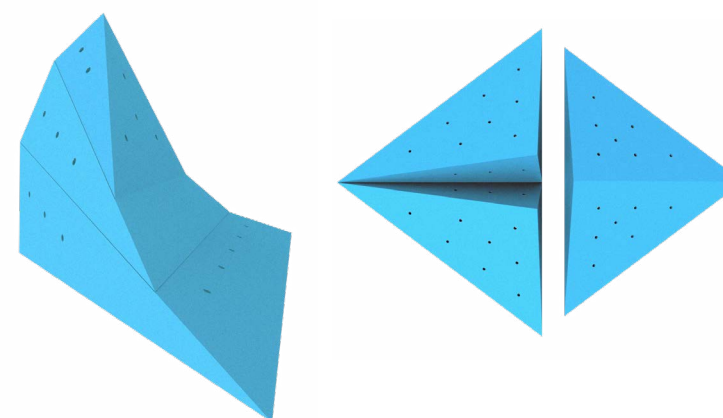


Photo: Grega Valančič

ILLUSION WOOD



MANTA COLLECTION

This collection of wood volumes was designed to be stacked on top of another, as smaller volumes are made to fit on top of volumes of a bigger size. Volumes are available in 90 ° and 60 ° angles, while sizes range from 75 cm to 145 cm. Left, right, open or closed angles, available in 6 different sizes, with the Manta collection, you'll be able to create the aesthetic, 3D climbing experience of your dreams for the climber.

Illusion HOLDS & VOLUMES

Illusion macros and volumes are produced in either Glass Reinforced Polyester (fiberglass) or wood at the same production facility where we produce our climbing walls. Most of the macros are available in Dual Texture or bi-color versions and all of our wood volumes are available with our without metric and imperial t-nuts, while some of our wood volumes have a bolt-on option.

LEADING THE WAY IN MODERN DESIGN – Illusion macros

These eye-catching macro collections were designed to allow maximum style, creativity, and dynamism to your routesetting. As these shapes are unidirectional (and dual – tex), they are perfect for use in climbing competitions or anywhere you want to “force” the climber into the position or sequence.



SPLOONG PINCH COLLECTION

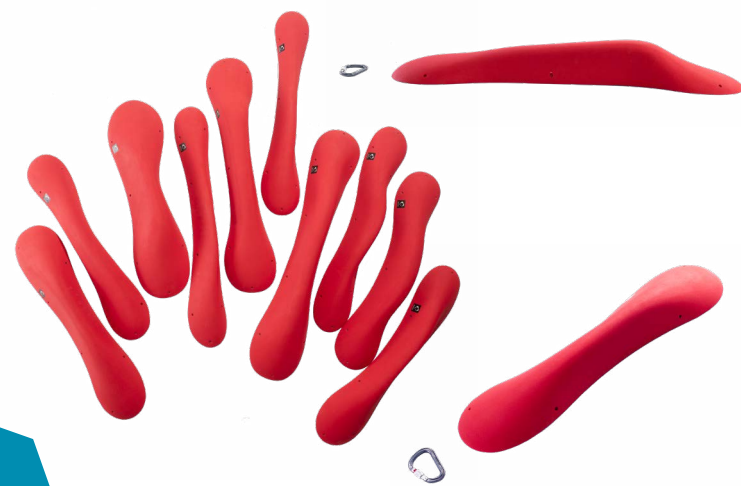
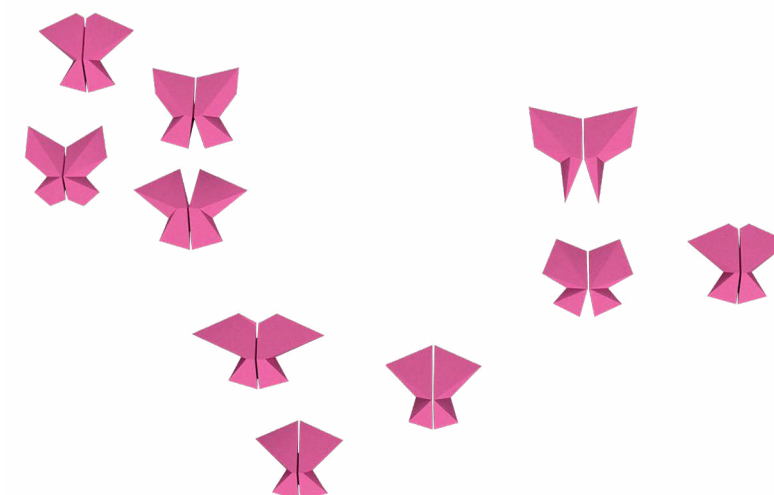


Photo: Grega Valančič



BUTTERFLY COLLECTION

Not only stunning to look at, but also extremely functional. This collection of wood volumes provides a unique topography to your climbing walls. They can be used in pairs or on their own or placed close together to create opportunities for crack climbing. Butterfly volumes are available in 10 different shapes, varying in size from 117 cm to 143 cm, while adding beauty to your routes or boulders.



DO YOU NEED A PRODUCTION PARTNER FOR YOUR CLIMBING BRAND?

Woodplastix offers OEM production of macros and volumes, climbing wall elements, and playground equipment in Glass Reinforced Polyester and wood. For more information, contact us at info@woodplastix.com.



WOOD PLASTIX



©NGphotos

Bel and his Pinches



CHA PINCH

DIGITAL CLIMBING HOLDS



2021-2022 is a year for our company that was, as we said in Dublin, Ireland when I was a kid, **halfos-halfos**.

The first **halfos** of this year brought amazing new developments to our company, with great results in competitions from our new athletic team and as always, new friends.

We started out in September 2021 through to November 2021 with additional distributors and quite frankly great hope for a creative, fruitful year.

Our new collection in the making, The Angles, reflected our state of mind and confidence in our producer in Ukraine. We even exposed the prototypes at the November Trade fair in Freideshafen. Our objective was to launch our new production in March 2022 for the new competition season, and challenge the best climbing athletes in the world. Always an ambitious mission.

The new series was a perfect continuity of our brand identity; lots of the same shapes, hiding an individual reflection with a cheeky technical challenge. Making climbing fun for all, athletes and routesetters. Business had picked up. The Covid year was finally past and we were definitely looking to an optimistic future.

The second **halfos** did not wait six months, it arrived early on February 24th, two days before a big delivery was due to leave Kiev.

Suddenly everything we built became futile and unimportant...

As I write this article, we are over seven months into the war. Our brave, amazing colleagues went back to work in April, and as they called for aid in the form of work, all hope was permitted. I was sure, very confident, that sales would pop back into place, even increase. There was so much support all around the world for Ukraine, I innocently thought that the minute the climbing community knew that the only climbing producer in Ukraine was back to work, in a war zone, they would get immediate and tremendous support.

They didn't. The past seven months have been very hard on the factory in Kiev.

Therefore, on their behalf:

- » We are grateful to all of our partners and friends that have shown support and placed orders, even taken stock.
- » We are grateful to climbing business journal USA for supporting our efforts to promote the only Ukrainian series that actually does NOT make any money for the brand. Every penny goes to the factory in Kiev.
- » We are very grateful to the clients around the world that actually bought the series
- » We are grateful to the Briançon competition organisers that stayed faithful
- » We are grateful to the competition organiser (Munch) that helped promote the Ukrainian series

SO WHERE TO NOW? WHAT ARE THIS YEAR'S LEARNINGS?

Well, we have learned so much, including the fact that we can both re-invent and even be creative logistically... so the coming year will all be about Direct Sales. We want the entire world to be able to buy Digital Climbing Holds.

From now on, we will be able to sell directly with our new world-wide shop. If a country does not have a distributor, we can still sell. And YES, deliver to anywhere in the world from a war zone.

Our new shop will deploy around the world over the next six months.

So why buy Digital Climbing Holds? Out of pity? To support Ukraine?

Well...

- » We deliver an excellent quality, both for our PU and our Fiberglass
- » We produce in less than 2 months
- » Our shapes are unique, there is always something new to do
- » We are price competitive
- » We are both Hold and Macro IFSC producers
- » We're bold!
- » We're fun!

MONSTER CHA BALL



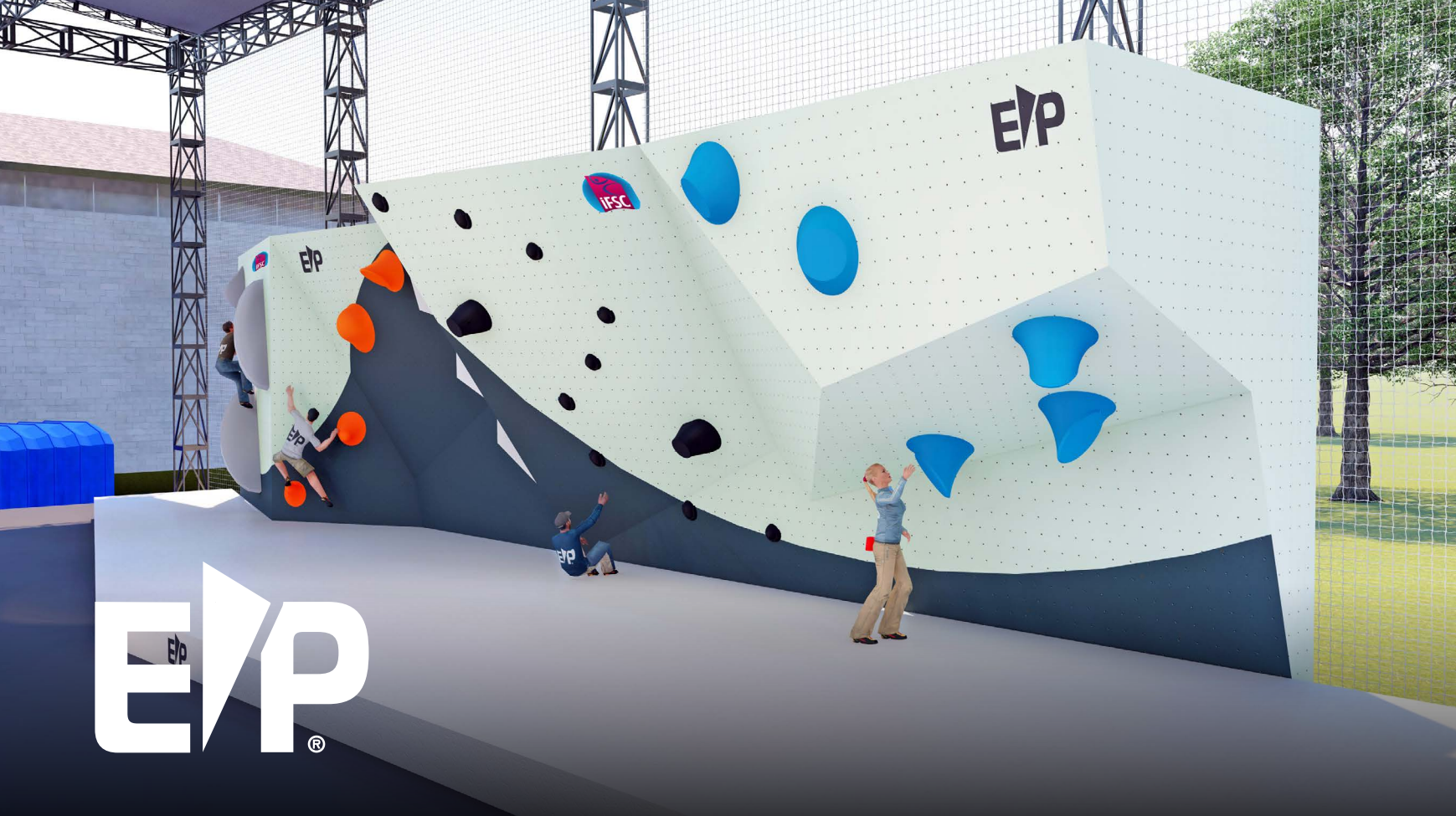
www.digital-climbing.com

CHA BALL XL



MONSTER POWER





EP RANGE WITH 8 NEW MACROS BY FLORENT BONVARLET



TITAN: THE NEW INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

TITAN is an exclusive EP Climbing boulder wall created in collaboration with the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) and planned for the IFSC World Championships Bern 2023 and the Olympic Games 2024 in Paris.

And as a standardized IFSC wall, you can place your bid to host national and international competitions and organize remote challenges with other TITAN gym owners.

With a breakthrough shape designed to offer the maximum range for routesetting and the reproduction of competition routes, adding this wall to your gym will attract a broader clientele, from international competitors to daily climbers.

Drawing on over 35 years of experience, EP Climbing's expertise is unmatched. EP also provides personalization possibilities to fit your gym's brand and routesetting training to optimize the appeal of your new boulder wall.

MEETING WITH FLORENT BONVARLET: SHAPER FOR EP CLIMBING

"Passionate about sculpting and climbing for many years, I created my own climbing macro brand, Volumes FB, in 2016.

Following the success of the fiberglass macros range released last year, Florent has expanded its EP range with 8 new macros. From S to XXL, from jugs to slopers, including crimps, mono-texture or dual texture: There is something for everyone!"

After years of experimenting, designing, and producing holds in my workshop with the help of some routesetter friends, I approached EP Climbing. Now I can concentrate solely on molding the hold shape while benefiting from EP's visibility and experience.

Motivated by pure design and the desire to construct ergonomic holds, this current range is the first created by me and produced exclusively by EP. Inspired by movement, like raindrops hitting the water, the roundness and softness of the curved holds are both technical and demanding, allowing routesetters to set for various climbing styles.

I sincerely hope you enjoy setting and climbing with them, as much as I enjoyed imagining them.



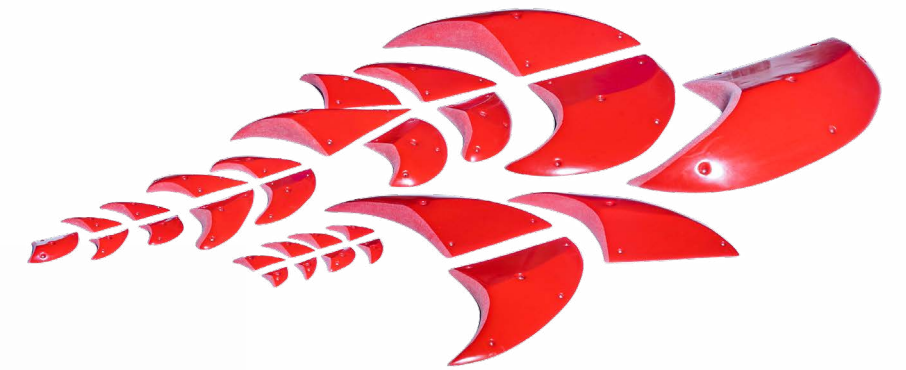
EP's volumes on Jakarta latest world cup.

Photo: Lena Drappella / IFSC



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.

GRIZZLY HOLDS

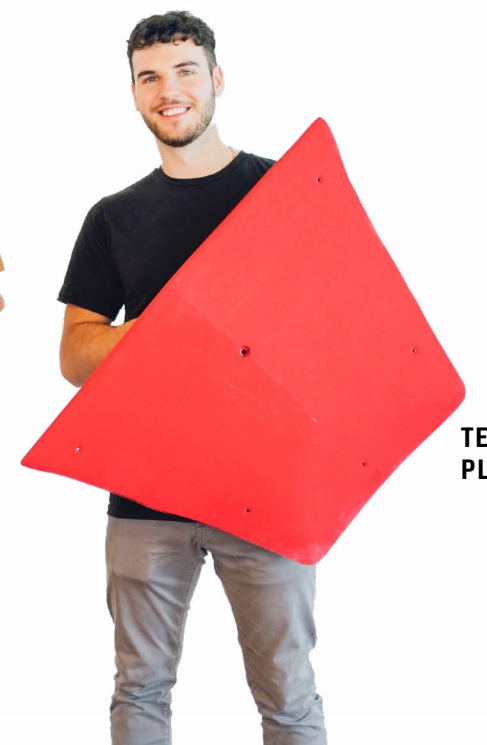


Inspiring routesetters through high-quality climbing holds poured from Aragon's industry leading polyurethane. Our shapes were designed with a focus on ergonomics, creativity, compatibility, and aesthetics. We want to provide routesetters with the tools to leave climbers with a memorable and positive climbing experience. Our mission is to produce timeless shapes that inspire routesetters to think outside of the box and push routesetting into the future.



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.



GLACIER'S - XXXL

TECTONIC PLATES - XXXL

MERIDIANS

5 massive dual-tex screw-on pinches! These pinches vary in difficulty and direction making them great competition holds. These are fully screw on holds, meaning no bolt holes to worry about and a comfortable grip all around. We precisely placed the dual-texture in areas that allow these to be high profile yet very directional and really force the pinch grip.

They work great for any angle, from jumpy slabs to powerful overhangs.



climbing holds

SHAPERS WANTED

Is this you?

You create
 We make it happen
 You get % of the profit

contact us for more info:  hrtholds



**DARIO STEFANOU –
 OMICRON**

Dario has been climbing for 17 years and shaping for the last 16 years.

The Master of dual texture holds created for HRT an unique and very attractive range of 48 shapes – xs to volumes.

The eye-catcher on every wall.



HRT BY ARTIST

OUR ARTIST-PARTNERS AND THEIR CREATIONS

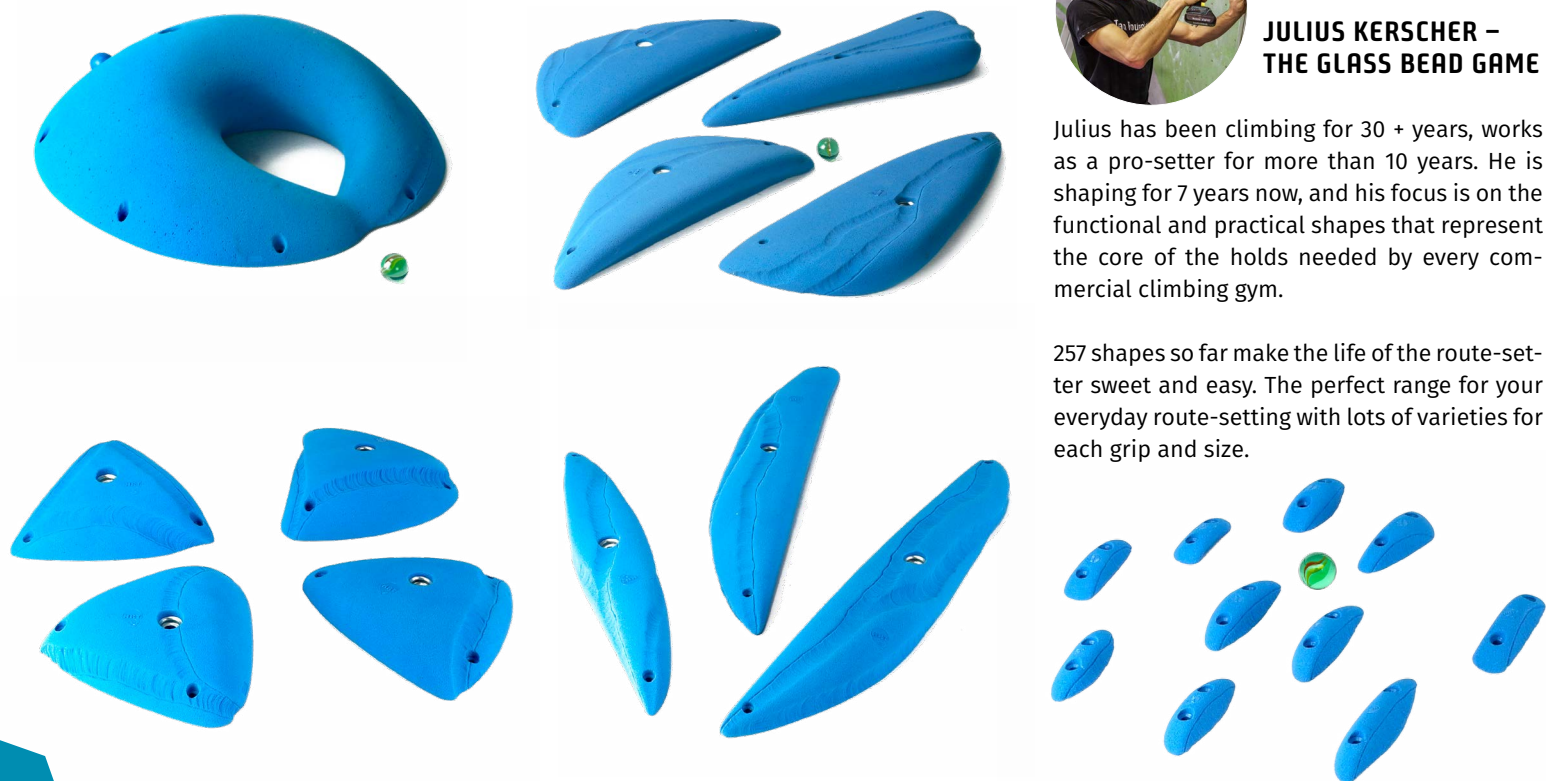
hrt-holds.com



**JULIUS KERSCHER –
 THE GLASS BEAD GAME**

Julius has been climbing for 30 + years, works as a pro-setter for more than 10 years. He is shaping for 7 years now, and his focus is on the functional and practical shapes that represent the core of the holds needed by every commercial climbing gym.

257 shapes so far make the life of the route-setter sweet and easy. The perfect range for your everyday route-setting with lots of varieties for each grip and size.



**NIKOLA PETROV –
 SPARTAN**

Nikola is a competition climber and commercial and competition setter for 12 years now. Started shaping just recently in 2020.

Clean and simple shapes with a very specific and recognizable outline of the bases of all holds and volumes. Great for competitions and boulders.





www.settercloset.com

KILTER X LEMUR Adjustable Frames

Adjustable slab: 24' x 14' -10° to 40°.

Adjustable steep wall with overhanging kick-board: 16' x 16' 30° to 70°.

Accommodates sprayboard or Kilter Board layouts, available with or without lights. More sizes available, let us help find the wall for you!



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. **708** grips by Ian Powell.



STRATO



SPEED BUMPS

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. **1936** grips from Peter Juhl.



STEALTH

DOWN CLIMB

Comfortable matchable overcut Downclimb Jug with dual-tex arrow.



KILTER by Ian Powell and Haptic by our pro setters/shapers design team. Over **5051** grips in PU from Aragon and Composite-X, fiberglass from Walltopia, and new VTF Recyclable Plastic Macros from Binary.



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. **120** grips by Ian Powell.



SOUTHERN WAVES

New Southern Waves Dual-Tex Slopers join the awesome Southern Slopers series. **109** 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.



SANDSTONE

Huge range of grips from Kaiju to tiny jibs work great for all applications. Complex Sandstone as featured in 2022 IFSC World Cup in Austria. **1329** grips by Ian Powell.



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).



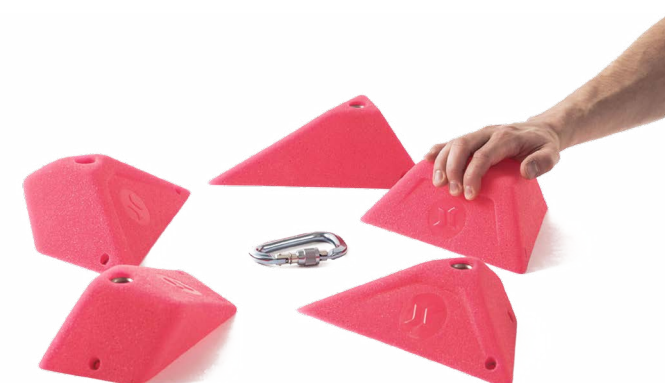
FACETS – HARD SLOPERS

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





University of Limerick built by KONG

KONG CLIMBING LTD

CLIMBING WALL MANUFACTURER AND HOLDS DISTRIBUTION

KONG Climbing Ltd was established in 2003 by climbers for climbers to create world-class climbing facilities. Founded by pioneering Lake District climber Paul Cornforth, our diverse and passionate team of designers, engineers, and fabricators specialise in creating innovative and bespoke engineering solutions for our customer's ever-ambitious aspirations.

Moving into 2021 Kong Climbing Ltd started up KONG Holds, a one-stop shop for Route setters and center managers to purchase holds and route setting equipment.

KONG Holds supplies holds, macros and Volumes from multiple brands including IFSC Authorised brands Ibex, Agripp, Digital and SUPR, alongside brands such as Arctic, HRT, Fiction, and the Classic KONG Shapes.



Giant Volumes by KONG, Agripp Macros

KONG DOWN CLIMB JUG – AVAILABLE FROM WINTER 22/23

Set of 4 Large jugs. Ideal for steep routes and roofs or for novice and beginner climbs.

The Kong Down Climb Jug is the perfect way to escape after finishing your boulder problem. Design to be positive and Juggy these holds are perfect for beginners to advanced climbers with their rounded profile, they offer a safe way down after sending that problem!



NEW KONG SHAPES FOR 2022/23



SANDSTORM SMALL - 19 SMALL HOLDS

This set of 19 holds is comprised of many small crimps with very positive edges, there are also a few small foothold blocks thrown in. This set would make both a great foothold and small handhold set. Most holds feature multiple screw holes for placement anywhere.



SANDSTORM MEDIUM - 10 MEDIUM HOLDS

This set of 10 holds features everything from blocky finger jugs to slopey footholds. A diverse set which is good for setting delicate insecure slab routes. Every hold features multiple screw holes for placement anywhere.



CLUNK CRIMPS - 12 SMALL HOLDS

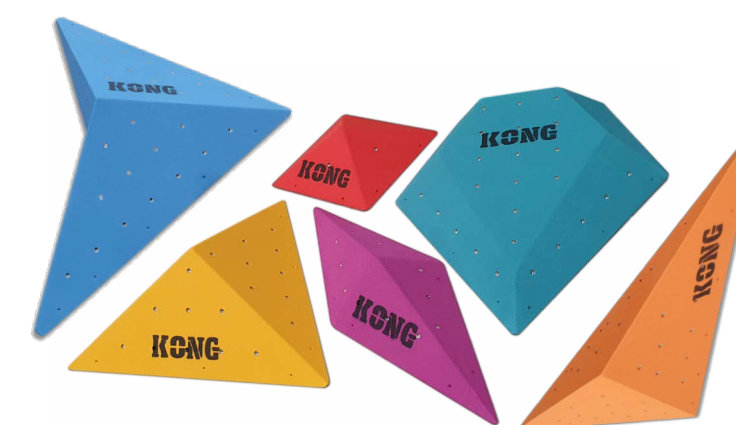
Like blocky crimps and pinches? We've got you covered. This set of 12 small holds have a geometric theme. Depending on which way the hold is set they can offer you a slopey or positive side. Most holds feature multiple screw holes for placement anywhere.

EGYPTIANS - 20 SMALL HOLDS

This artistic set will bring some style to any wall they're set on. This is the largest of the new sets which features delicate dishes and a few nice pinches and one really hard one! This set includes 20 holds. Most holds feature multiple screw holes for placement anywhere.



Giant Volumes by KONG



VOLUMES

All volumes are made to order at Kong Climbing's Workshop near Keswick, in the heart of the Lake District, by our experienced team.

All the volumes are manufactured with as many bolt-on sites as possible, enabling you a greater range of route setting possibilities and all fixation points on our volumes are reinforced with durable washers to protect the wood and ensure the lifetime of your volume is long and healthy.



SET
YOUR
OWN
ROUTE

www.muskersclimbing.com



www.naturalprogressionclimbing.com

MUSKERS - MAGNETIC ROUTE MARKERS

Muskers are simple (removable) devices that help us indicate the bouldering routes that we design for our indoor trainings. Muskens remain attached by a powerful magnet to the holds we include in the route that we have designed.

Easier, faster, more efficient and above all more fun. Muskens, made of soft and flexible silicone in different colors allow us to design and mark climbing problems.

With Muskens you will be able to design different routes by marking all the holds that the climber must take. In addition, with Muskens Climbing App you will be able to upload to the "cloud" the routes that you have designed based on their difficulty, length, characteristics, etc... so you can share your routes and make them available to other users, and in the same way you can climb routes designed by other users. Now you are the route setter!

MAGNETIC BOULDER MARKERS PACK
Pack of 20 units of magnetic devices for marking climbing routes in indoor spaces. This telescopic pack contains 20 Muskens (magnetic silicone devices) that will help you make your climbing training more productive and fun.

With the Muskens you will be able to design different steps/routes by marking all the holds or grips that the climber who is going to try the route must take. In addition, with Muskens Climbing App you will be able to upload to the cloud the routes that you are designing based on difficulty, length, characteristics, etc... so you can share and make available to other users the routes that you are designing, and in the same way you can make routes designed by other users. Now you too can be a route setter!



MUSKERS MAGNETIC BAG
Polyester bag with magnetic base and belt (chalk bag type), to be tied around the waist to carry with you or collect the Muskens while climbing, this bag, will enable us to play new games and training dynamics



MUSKERS THUMB TACK BOX
Pack of 50 flat head metal studs to place Muskens outside of the holds this way we comfortably place the Muskens on the tack, thus avoiding any inconvenience and eliminating the possibility that every time we try the route, we drop the Musker.



LOOKING BACK TO GO FORWARD: CRAFT CLIMBING PRODUCTS FROM SUSTAINABLE WOODS.

Our beginnings in climbing were at the beginning of the 90s, when it was belayed with eight descenders, eight grade climbers were legends, there were no training gyms and tight tights were religion. The attraction to climbing was immediate, in a small crag very close to home.

With all the experience gained during more than two decades both in climbing and in the art of woodworking, in 2014 we decided to link our two passions, and in this way Natural Progression was born, a project focused on offering a range of high quality products produced by and for climbers.

We work only with proximity wood from sustainable woods. From trees planted by our grandparents.

CAMPUS INSTALLATION - Innovation, knowledge and rigor to reate the ideal setting for training

The analysis and study of the climber's body morphology allows us to create suitable movement patterns for high-level training.



A team of advisers made up of elite climbers, doctors, physiotherapists, and trainers, guarantee our training solutions.

WOOD HOLDS AND VOLUMES
The hand crafted shapes and volumes created from sustainable wood perfectly reflect our trajectory as climbers and woodworkers.

We look for the most ergonomic shapes to strengthen tendons and joints, and at the same time protect them from injuries and traumas. Years of research have allowed us to produce the perfect formula to achieve touch and adherence at the highest level in the world.

The artisan process allows us to attend to fully customized orders, from shapes to finishes and colours. Tell us what your panel is like, and we will manufacture for you exactly what you need.





www.shop.nicros.com

SIMPLE JUGS

Every wall needs a set of jugs that can withstand the test of time and heavy usage. Simple Jugs provide variety on walls of all angles from vertical, to steep, and as a great clipping hold on various lead climbs.



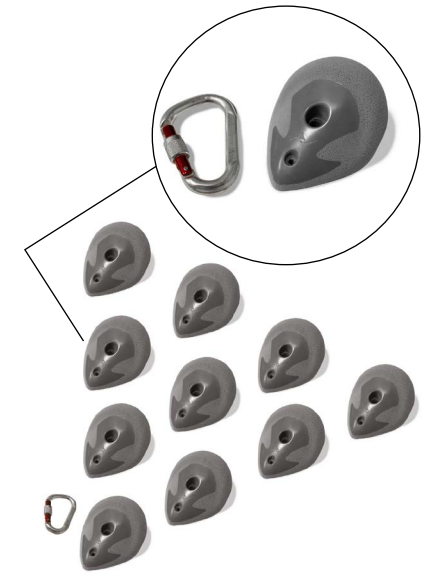
SYSTEMS TRAINING

As climbers, we are always searching for the most efficient training methods and tools. Developed, tested and approved by climbers, Nicros' system holds help to increase hand strength by training both sides evenly so you can push past plateaus and send it!



BUMPS

From small to EXTREME, the slopers in the Bumps series help create specific movement. They will ignite inspiration in route setters and challenge climbers' techniques.



DOWN CLIMB #3

Clean and simple design sporting dual texture and a large radiused feature for easy down climbing. The arrow points the way! Available in sets of 5 or 50.



FIBER GLASS VOLUMES (E.H.T™)

Big features do not mean big weight anymore. These larger-than-life volumes are made with Nicros patented Extreme Hold Technology™ (E.H.T™) offering organic curves without weighing down your route setter.

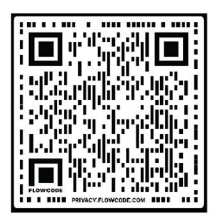


WOOD VOLUMES

Whether your wall is vertical or overhung, add some topography to any flat climbing surface to revitalize the wall. With precisely placed t-nuts and coated with our premium NicroLite™ texture, bolt on holds for added features or dare climbers to use the volume as a hold itself.

NICROS

Since the beginning in 1992, Nicros's mission has been to create a handhold for every hand. Through inspiration, dedication, and the love of climbing, this mission carries on today. Nicros has adapted to new trends in climbing; beginning with small textured hand holds to walls that have the look and feel of real rock (A.R.T Wall™). Now creating NicroLite™ panels for home walls and larger than life volumes, perfect for competitions.

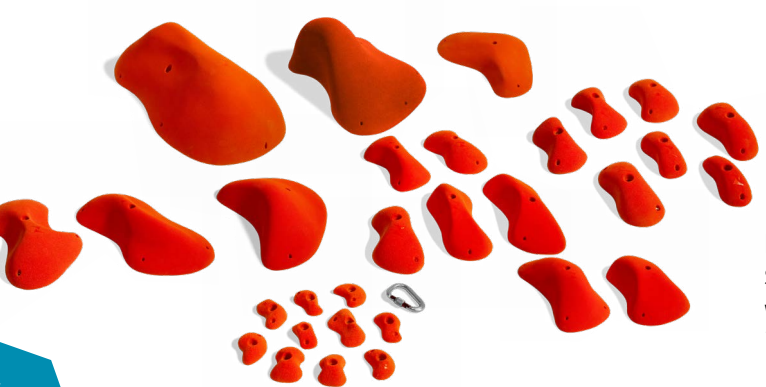


ARES

Inspired by the Greek God of War, Ares, these holds will challenge climbers to battle their way up the wall. Offering a multitude of hold types from large slopers and pinches down to small screw ons. It will be no easy feat to fight your way to the top.

HUECOS

Designed & shaped by USAC Coach, Gabe Olson, each hold was carefully hand carved to provide the sensation of a classic hueco. This fresh take on huecos is designed for everyone and is an essential set in your route setter's toolbox.



MOGULS

Similar to the moguls you will find on your favorite ski hill, these slopers will push climbers to make creative movement up the wall. The eye-catching holds are designed with the serious climber in mind.



Built with: Nicros' NicroLite™ Wall System



SWOOSHIES

The Swooshies have been designed for route setting on slabs, with more insecure and balance style climbing in mind. These shapes are extremely aesthetic, and will look incredible on any wall.

SWAMPIES

The Swampies, designed for the more technical slab style boulders, this range of four low profile shapes will not disappoint.



POINTS

The Points are another new addition to the Stax catalogue. These shapes are available in four different sizes and have been designed to stack on one another to create a more positive hold. This is an extremely versatile shape that has both a positive and sloping profile, a must have for any route setting team!

MADE BY ROUTE SETTERS

Stax Volumes was established in 2019 by Will Atkinson, the head route setter at Portside Boulders, Western Australia. Originally just wanting to make a few shapes for the gym, but it soon became apparent that there was a market for our volumes.

We are now a small team of designers, manufacturers and distributors of high quality birch plywood volumes with our very own workshop in the heart of Fremantle, as well as having a manufacturing base in Bulgaria. We supply quality volumes to the whole of Australia as well as Europe.

We continue to grow and we are very excited to soon be releasing our first fiberglass range of holds and macros!

TOMAHAWKS

Stackable, and with mirrored partners, these will really bring out the creativity when setting banging boulders! There are a number of stackable volumes available out there, but we think our Tomahawks are definitely a fresh take on this.

Available in small, medium, large, both left and right.



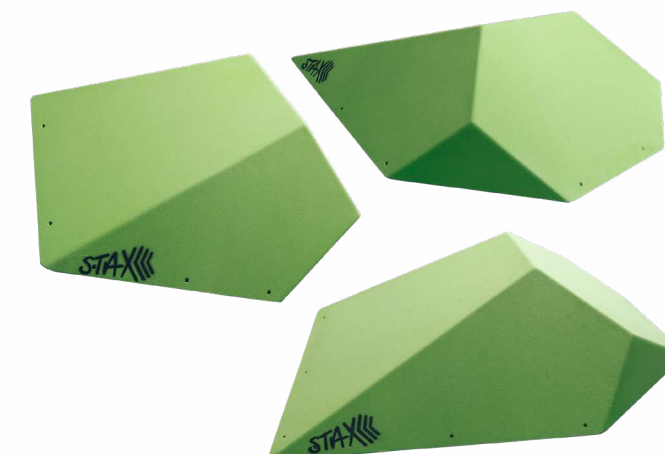
ARROWHEADS

Two very different shapes that come together to make one. Slopers, crimps and jugs are all achievable with these awesome volumes.

Available in small, medium, large in sets of two.

BLOBS

The Blobs are one of our latest offerings, designed to be used on all degrees of wall surfaces. The largest of the three is great for vert and slab, while the smallest in the set has some more positive profiles which are more suited to steeper terrain. These features are big, versatile and extremely eye-catching



FINS

The Fins come in four different shapes, and are designed to match up as blockers, slots and crimps. From a positive jug to a 35 degree sloping nightmare, they've got you covered!



UNLEASHED CLIMBING INSPIRED BY MOVEMENT

www.unleashedclimbing.com

Unleashed Climbing is an Australian brand born from the inspiration of movement and design. In the search for top quality materials and production Unleashed is continuing to work with Composite-x and Walltopia as we believe this combination offers the best solution for our customers.

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 remains the driving force behind the shaping and development at Unleashed. With over 20 years of route setting and shaping experience his motivation has never been stronger to produce the best possible products for creating your stories in movement.

DUAL TEX COMMAS

The Commas are Unleashed Climbing first Dual Tex offering. Designed to force movement by limiting the foot placements and thumb catches so a climber has to be extremely careful. The Commas name stems from the punctuation marks they vaguely mimic. If a comma creates a pause in a sentence then these macros will cause a pause in your movement.

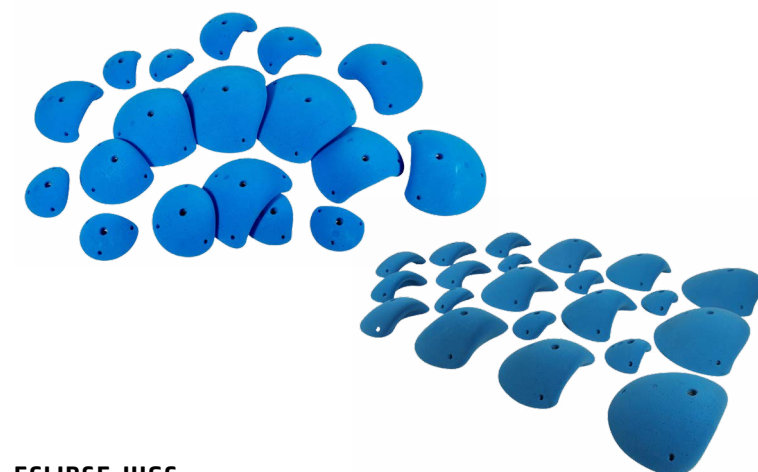
Produced at Walltopia the texture remains the same as previously and the transition between texture and gloss is fine and neat. The full set of 13 shapes includes pinches, slopers and edges and allow for extremely varied setting. We are excited to see how this family of macros grows over the next 12 months and the inclusion of a PU full texture family in 2023 will add to its versatility.



ANGLES

To accompany the Original Macros from 2021 this line of Macros continues the evolution. 90 and 120 degree angles with straight edges allow this family of macros to be set on the extreme edge of features, walls and volumes. Setting them back to back and linking them in together can generate some interesting shapes and movements. Coupled with

the Loaves and the Original Macros these 18 new shapes get bigger and more versatile so you can create King Lines and feature blocs on any walls. Produced at Walltopia the texture is fine, grippy and long lasting even on the well travelled climbs.

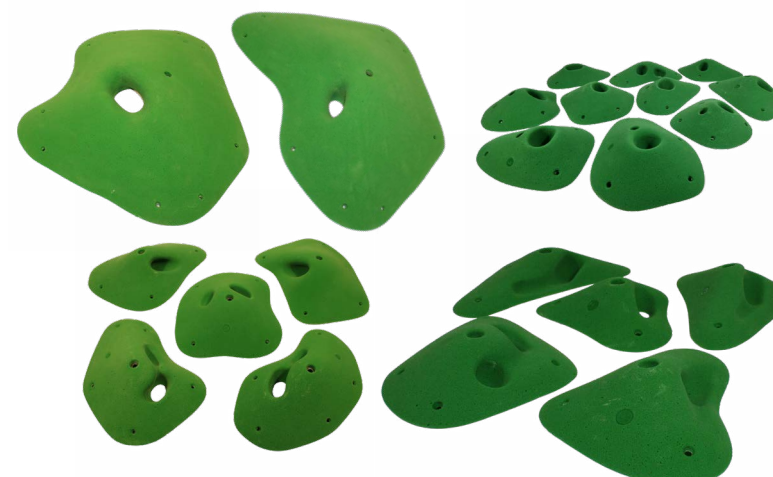


LOAVES

The Loaves offer you a simple and pleasing shape that is directional yet diverse. Within the increasing number of 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 JUGS

The Eclipse Jug family contains 21 rounded and comfortable grips suitable for beginner slabs up to the steepest roof pump fest. Because of the unique rounded appearance it is difficult to know what you are about to grab. This makes them mentally challenging and means if you double up the sets they remain interesting. In 2023 there will be another size added and also extra sets of the larger set D.

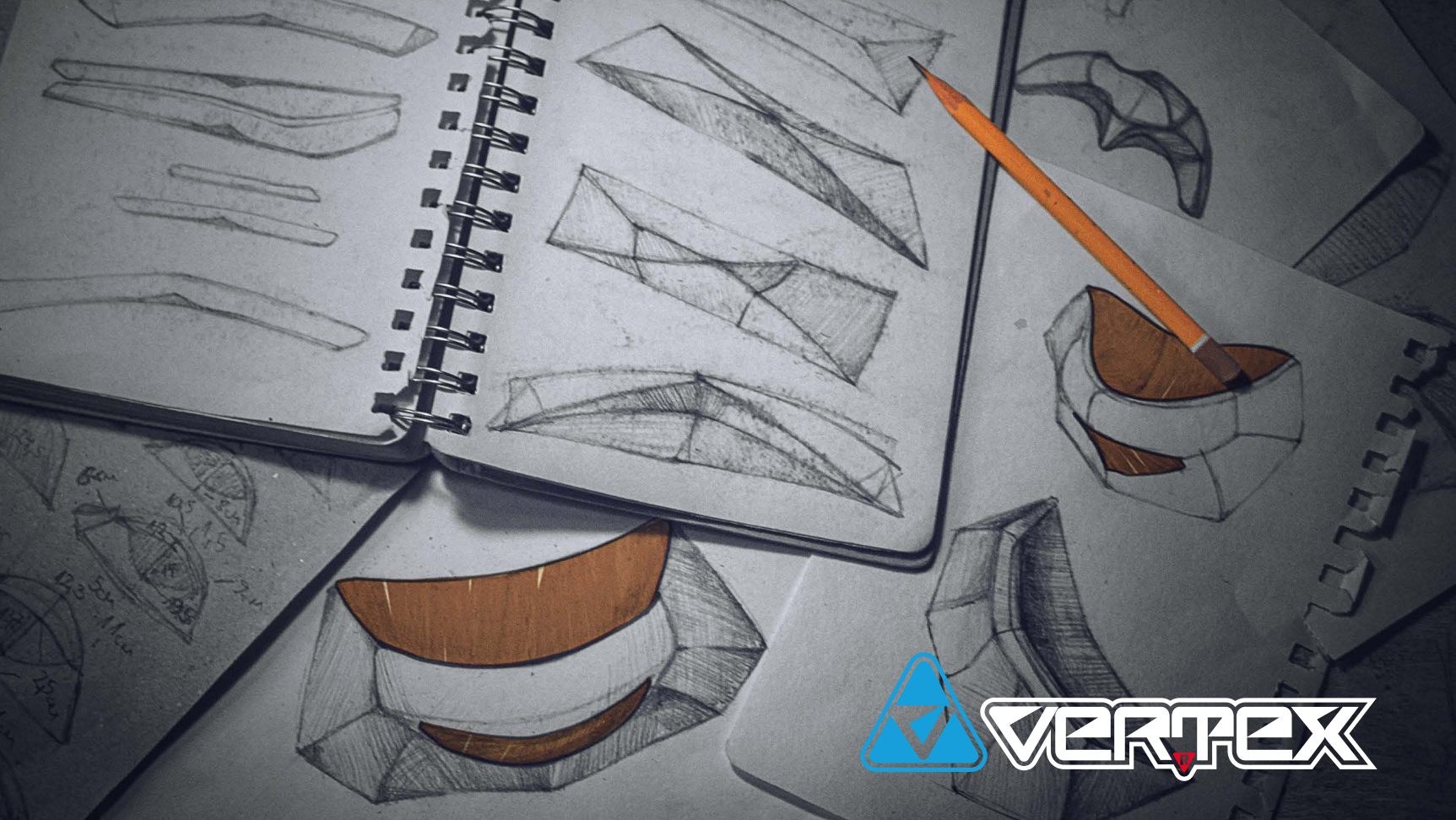


DOWN CLIMB JUG. DOWN CLIMB FOOTHOLD

We all know safety for our climbers is a priority when we come to setting the best we can. The advent of Down Climbing Holds a few years ago saw them become the most popular hold on the market. The Unleashed Down Jug has become well known across Australia for its comfort, easy of use and pleasing look.

This is all very well but in gyms where the setting is sparse a beginner can still struggle with the lack of appropriate foot holds. Now we have the solution. A simple foothold that can be easily recognised and will not hinder any blocs set around it. A hold that beginners can aim for and feel safe while controlling their decent.

Available in PE from Composite-x to reduce costs and enhance the colour range available.



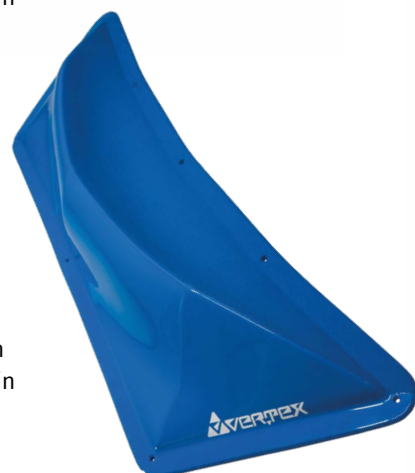
VERTEX HOLDS & VOLUMES

Vertex Design's main goal is to achieve optimal functionality of the product while being in line with the modern trends in climbing and embracing the aesthetic beauty and harmony of the shape. The clean and clear structure, variety of grips and combinability of Vertex prod-

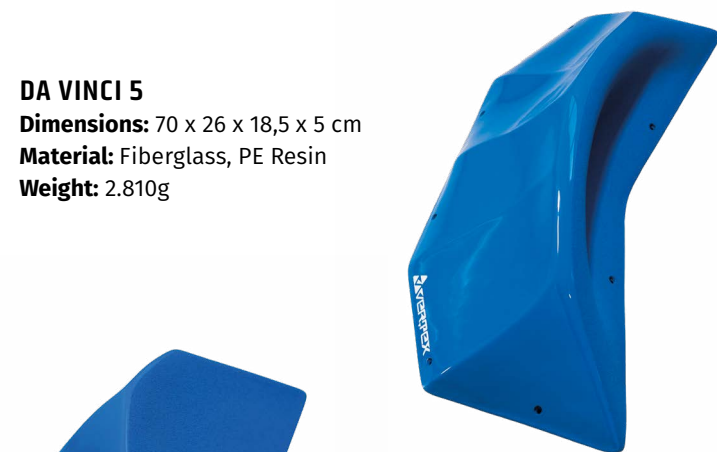
ucts offer the route setter the possibility to create countless climbing routes with ease. Vertex has opted to design and construct double texture volumes with a line that increases the difficulty and precision of climbing while stimulating the creativity of the route setter.



DA VINCI 2
Dimensions: 126 x 36 x 15.5 cm
Material: Fiberglass, PE Resin
Weight: 3.650g



DA VINCI 4
Dimensions: 125 x 31 x 15 cm
Material: Fiberglass, PE Resin
Weight: 3.350g



DA VINCI 5
Dimensions: 70 x 26 x 18,5 x 5 cm
Material: Fiberglass, PE Resin
Weight: 2.810g



DA VINCI 7
Dimensions: 59 x 25 x 17 cm
Material: Fiberglass, PE Resin
Weight: 1.840g

SYMBIOSIS 3
Dimensions: 65 x 6 x 19 cm
Material: Fiberglass, PE Resin
Weight: 2.200g



SYMBIOSIS 4
Dimensions: 69 x 42 x 20 cm
Material: Fiberglass, PE Resin
Weight: 3.000g



SYMBIOSIS 5
Dimensions: 80 x 44 x 22 cm
Material: Fiberglass, PE Resin
Weight: 3.000g



SYMBIOSIS 7
Dimensions: 96,5 x 34 x 17 cm
Material: Fiberglass, PE Resin
Weight: 3.000g



Vertex climbing holds use the latest, revolutionary Polyurethane resin Dannomond. It's a high-performance pure Polyurethane, used primarily in the production of indoors climbing holds. Characteristics like higher wear resistance, bright colors, dry soft texture and endurance make it the first choice material for Vertex climbing holds. Route setters and gym owners alike appreciate the long life and the ease of route it achieves.

TRANSFORMERS 2
Grip: Crimps, Edges, Pinches, mixed
Size: L, M
Holds #: 4 pcs = 2M + 2L
Net Weight: 1.691 g
Material: PU



TRANSFORMERS 4
Grip: Crimps, Edges, Pinches, mixed
Size: M, S
Holds #: 10 pcs = 1M + 9S
Net Weight: 997 g
Material: PU



einstein Düsseldorf Germany 2022



Traunstein Germany 2022
Full Service solution. Design, construction & matting.

BOULDERGYM DEVELOPMENT, DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

www.benkyclimbing.com



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

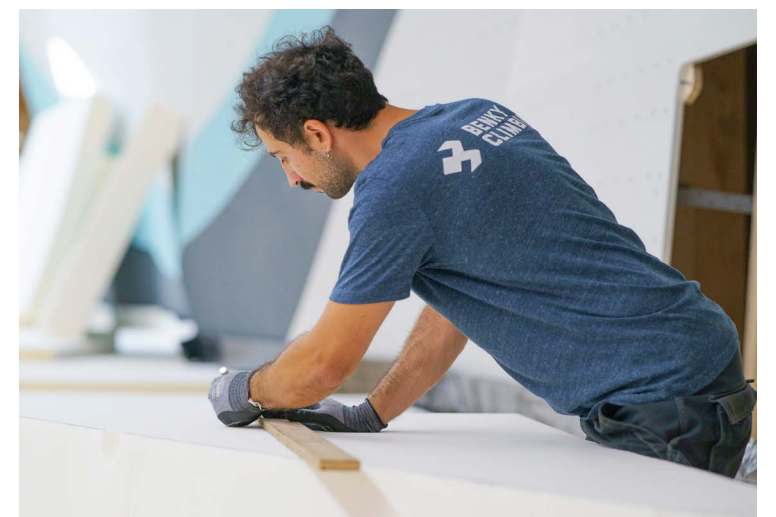
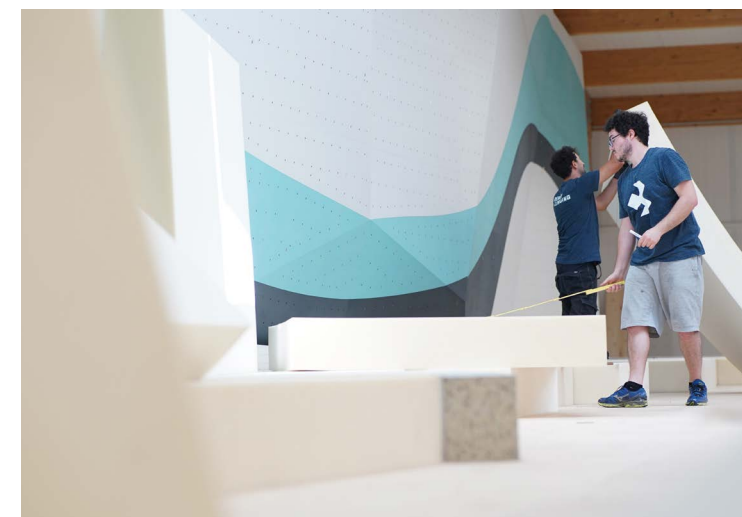
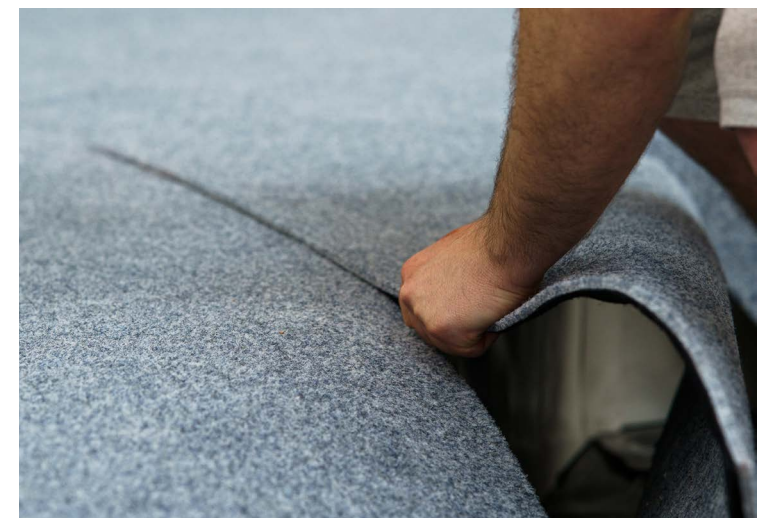
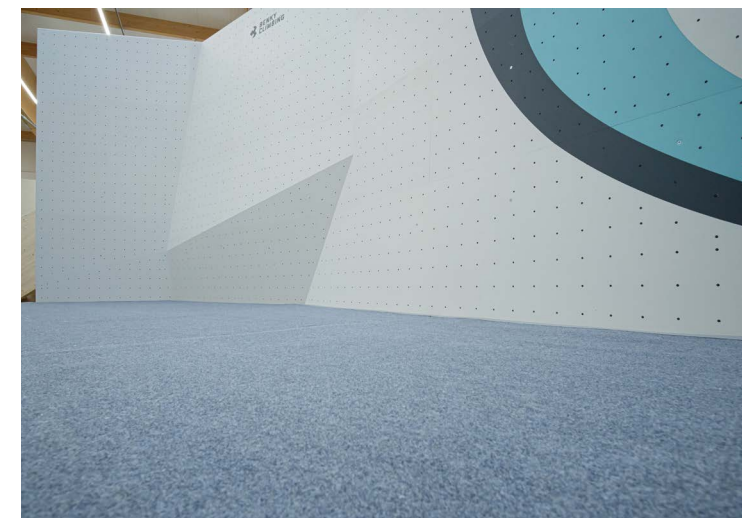
We've been always passionate climbers. Bouldering all over the world and being active world-cup competitors, we have more than 25 years experience in the climbing industry. We have the knowledge and requirements to design your boulder-gym from the beginning.

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.





ABOUT CITYWALL

www.citywall.eu

Here at Citywall, we live and breathe climbing walls: executing every project with devotion, focus and a personal touch, while ensuring that no detail is neglected. With every project, we strive to be a **reliable partner** to our clients, taking their ideas from conception to realization and providing them with the climbing structures of their dreams. For the past **25 years**, Citywall has been producing and installing the highest quality climbing walls for our clients **across the world**, providing them with “turn key” solutions with:

- » Indoor and outdoor climbing walls
- » Boulder and rope climbing walls
- » Climbing walls for schools and kindergartens
- » Playground equipment
- » Self-standing climbing towers
- » Mobile towers and boulders
- » Climbing walls for pools
- » Private home walls
- » Any other custom-made climbing structure

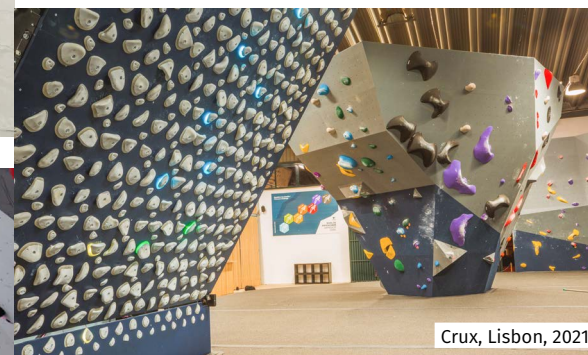
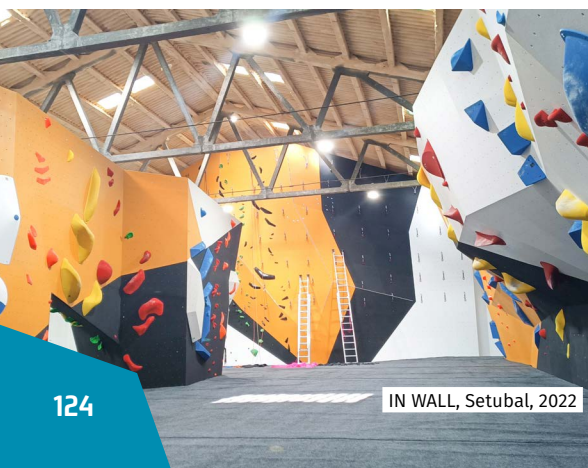
Because safety does not happen by accident, we recently added a new brand of custom-made safety flooring, **Citymat**, to our portfolio.



SUSTAINABILITY IS ON OUR MIND FROM THE BEGINNING OF PRODUCTION.

At Citywall, we have a preference for using wood for as many elements of your climbing wall as possible. Wood is the most sustainable construction material in use and responsibly sourced wood is more carbon and energy efficient than other building materials.

Did you know that substructure made from galvanized steel PRODUCE an average of 3300kg of CO2 emissions for 100m2 of walls? On the other hand, Citywall's wood-based climbing walls STORE an average of 1800kg of CO2 for 100m2 of walls.



Creativity and efficiency are our driving forces, which enable us to combine optimal space, management, functionality, and diversity. Due to the skills and training of our own production and assembly teams (**and the ISO 9001 standards we follow consistently**) we are able to achieve the envisioned goal for our clients with minimal resources and maximum efficiency. For more information contact us at info@citywall.eu.

DREAMWALL



Sharma Climbing Gava

Photo: Riki Gianola

SHARMA CLIMBING, GAVA

Epic! It's the best way to describe it! Sharma Climbing Gava is a full service climbing gym (3500 sq.m. of climbing surface), located in Barcelona, Gava. This is probably one of the most recognisable recent projects in Europe. It is built to be a high profile training facility for professional athletes. At the same time, it provides a huge dedicated climbing area for beginners. Dreamwall's team, along with Chris Sharma put an enormous amount of effort designing the walls and each climbing surface with the intention to provide an unforgettable climbing experience for climbers with different capabilities.

- » Floating boulder - Chris's crazy idea...a challenge to engineer, more than 15 m. long with a total of 160 sq.m. climbing it is probably the biggest of its kind in the world.
- » Competition wall - 17,5 meters tall and the impressive 13m. Overhang with a perfect profile for the world elite of climbing.
- » The Tower - a 17 m high self-standing tower is the central piece of the main hall.
- » Speed wall - what is a training facility of such scale without a Speed wall, compliant with the standard

Quite impressive for a first project, isn't it?



Floating Boulder, Sharma Climbing Gava

DREAM BIG: FROM ONE CLIMBING FAMILY TO OTHERS THE RISING STAR IN THE CLIMBING WALL INDUSTRY ALREADY HAS 20+ PROJECTS SINCE 2021

A relatively new but already well known, Dreamwall has managed to become one of the preferred climbing wall suppliers in the industry. With its various projects in Spain, UK, France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria, the company has proven its dedication and enthusiasm that are the solid foundation behind the brand's mission: To create gyms from climbers to climbers.

Dreamwall has its own in-house design, engineering, production, and installation teams, with a total of 35 professionals working full time. If we have to define Dreamwall's approach, it is the personal and friendly connection with the customer that is the leading philosophy behind the brand. Maintaining constant communication with the management team is essential part of the working process and is something that they value. Alex and Ivo (the familiar faces behind the brand) believe that each customer becomes a friend and each project an essential part of their own path.

Dreamwall's factory is located in Sofia District, Bulgaria. Each step of a project is managed by an experienced team leader who works closely with the company's management. An average of 15 000 sq.m of climbing walls per year are being manufactured.



Ivo and Alex at Sharma Climbing Gava opening, Sept. 2021



BouBa, Baden, Switzerland

Photo: Peter Hülser

BOUBA, BADEN, SWITZERLAND

Bouder Baden is a trendy boulder gym designed in a warm natural wood color scheme. Bouba is located in a building that used to serve as an ex scrap factory with an unusual and challenging roundy shape, in terms of engineering. The gym offers 1200 sq.m. of climbing surface distributed in a smart and efficient way. The combination of mezzanines creates a second level of boulders, utilizing the space. Two level boulders and self-standing boulders connected with bridges makes Bouba, Baden unique.



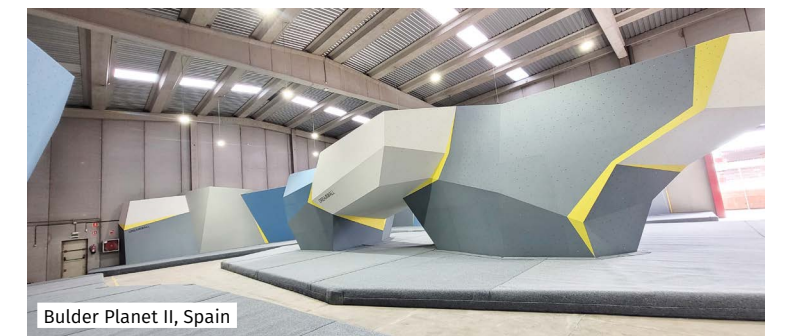
Ischgl, Austria

ISCHGL, AUSTRIA - 2300 M. ABOVE SEA LEVEL

Located on a high altitude - 2300m. in the heart of Alps, made of flat GRP (Glass Reinforced panels) it gives the look of a traditional climbing wall. The installation of Ischgl had to be carefully planned and executed since the weather conditions were an unusual challenge to face. This boulder was made of Hot Deep Galvanized steel structure, stainless fasteners and Fiberglass Panels - all durable materials to guarantee the long lasting high quality, allowing for the boulder to stay under the snow for half of the year.

BULDER PLANET II, SPAIN

The highlight of Bulder Planet is the self-standing mushroom with a special feature - The Arch, according to Ivo, is one of the best arches he has ever installed. The layout aims to offer different sections in different style so that each section can provide an individual climbing experience. Even though the 30 meter long boulders are not divided, with the right choice of colors and the difference in the height of the structures, each section could appear as a separate feature. Overall, the space has been designed to provide an airy feeling and maximum comfort and for its users.



Bulder Planet II, Spain



Urbanwall, Milano, Italy

URBANWALL, MILANO, ITALY

The new central piece of UrbanWall - Milano Climbing Factory is a 16 meter high self-standing tower, providing 460 sq.m of climbing surface for climbing enthusiasts. A huge logo was incorporated in the shape of the wall, facing the main entrance. On the back site of the tower you'll find a World-Cup Standard speed wall integrated. The project was significant because of the engineering challenges to overcome. The flooring did not allow the usual approach of anchoring because of the underfloor heating. On the other hand the ceilings did not allow any sort of attachment. Yet, no..it is not a floating tower - just a smart engineered one.



sintroc

A 33 YEARS LONG HISTORY

Sint Roc dates back to 1989, when we built the first legendary climbing wall at Arco, Italy, home to the famous annual RockMaster competition.

In 2022 we are still at the forefront of climbing wall development and our 33 years-long experience is an absolute guarantee for our customers. We provide unparalleled expertise in designing, manufacturing and assembling climbing walls, but also a profound knowledge of the needs and current trends of this evolving market. Our walls have hosted dozens of international events from World Cups to World Championships. In July 2022 we established the new worldclass Competition Wall in Koper (Slovenia). We are proud to contribute to the development and history of Sport Climbing. Some of the biggest developments in sport climbing were pioneered in our factory in Arco: such as the first holds and panels for Speed Climbing.

Our knowledge is not limited to competition walls though. In the last three decades we built hundreds of climbing structures from school walls to huge climbing gyms all across Europe. After completing in early 2021 the new Gaswerk Kletterzentrum in Wädenswil (Switzerland), with more than 6000 sqm climbing surface one of the biggest climbing gym in the world, in 2022 we started to build the Solid Climbing Club in Milano. Not only is this one of the biggest climbing gym in Italy, but it will also provide unparalleled climbing facilities. We are proud that so many important and experienced customers have placed their trust in Sint Roc. In doing so they recognise our tireless commitment to quality, safety and reliability.

www.sintroc.com

DETAILS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE



Solid Climbing Club, Buccinasco (MI) - project



Gaswerk Kletterzentrum, Wädenswil (CH)



Vertikale, Bressanone (BZ)



PANEL COATING

- » Homogeneous texture
- » High resistance
- » Excellent friction
- » Dirt resistant
- » Easy cleaning
- » UV resistant polyurethane for outdoor use
- » Full range of colours



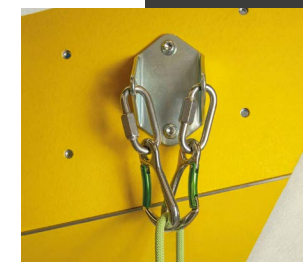
HOLD INSERTS

- » Oversized flange
- » High resistance thread
- » Stainless steel for outdoor use



EDGE PROTECTION

- » 5 mm integrated stainless steel stripe
- » Low visual impact
- » Safe and durable



TOP BELAY POINT

- » Steel plate
- » No chain
- » Two independent bolting points and steel carabiners
- » Full stainless system for outdoor use



INTERMEDIATE PROTECTION POINT

- » Integrate gummy protection
- » "No quick link" system available



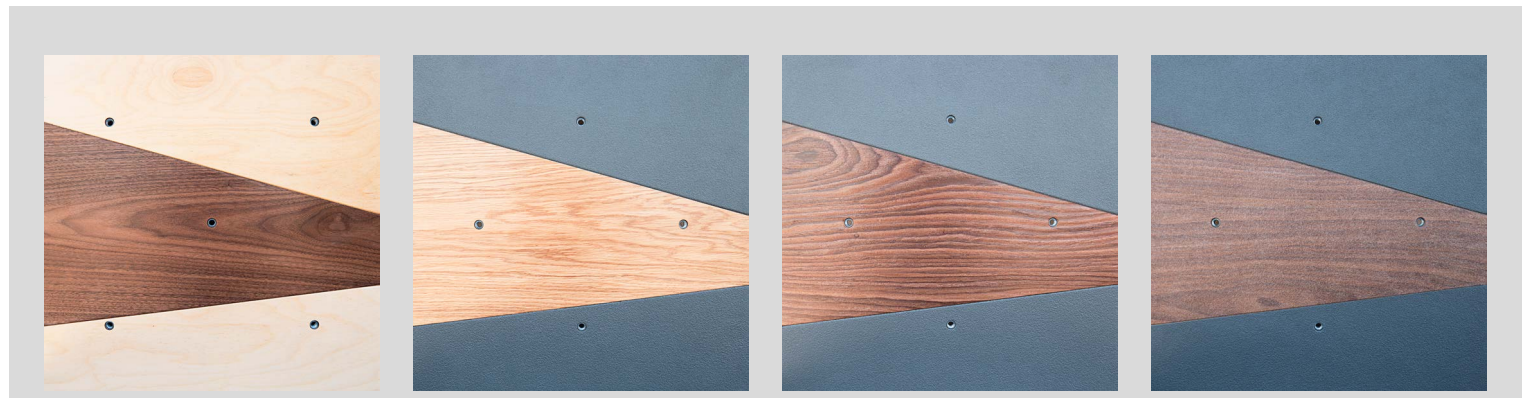
ROUTE PLATES

- » Integrated route plates
- » Plexiglas protection
- » Paper or E-plate available



OLD IS NEW WITH WALLTOPIA NATURAL WOOD PANELS LINE

Level Up, Belgium



The natural wood panels come in different shades and offer various combinations and accommodate a site's natural light and color scheme of choice. All panels are treated with a transparent coating displaying the wood's natural color and aesthetics. You may choose between friction and non-friction texture or experiment with Walltopia's dual-textured surfaces. Both types of textures resist climbing shoe rubber and are easy to maintain always-like-new.

“ At Walltopia, when speaking about design styles and features that also consider the current trends, we take into account our clients' unique thoughts and visions. The natural wood panels have the potential to change the way climbing gyms look while preserving the functionality of the walls as climbing structures, and from what we see so far, it is here to stay.”

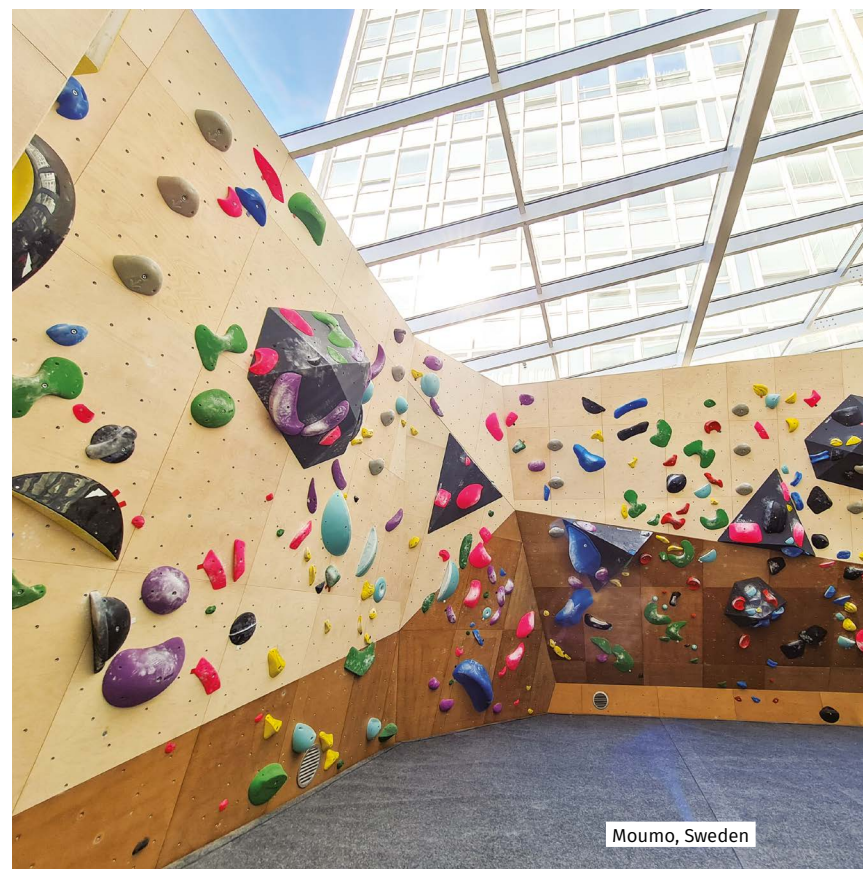
says Toma Kirilov, Walltopia's Head of Design & Architecture

If the ultimate test of a new design style is how it is perceived by the clients and, of course, by the climbers, that means natural wood is a winner. Browsing through Walltopia's social media fan pages, and getting feedback from our clients, we can say it definitely looks like it is well-received. The natural wood panels line is indeed a game changer in climbing gym designs and will hang out for some time to make climbers feel at home in the climbing gym.

Long gone are the days when for a climbing gym to happen, you only need some walls and some holds. Details matter, location matters, total climbing surface matters, and most importantly - design matters (and pays back, too).

That trend is no surprise for Walltopia. Since its early days, the company has been leading the innovations in climbing gym design - from 3D curved wall design, through LED and plexiglass features within the climbing wall, to custom color technology. The company's natural wood panels is the latest design trend in Walltopia's portfolio and highly preferred in the recent years.

It is a gentle reminder of the industry's past, and at the same time, it leads its way to a future where less is more and natural wins over extraordinary. Its warmer look brings coziness and, mixed with natural light, a feeling of flow. It matches well solid color panels and suits both boulder gyms and rope walls projects.



Moumo, Sweden



Substation Brixton, UK



Find out more at
www.walltopia.com

WALLTOPIA

TAKE SAFETY TO THE NEXT LEVEL WITH HIGHER EYE - AN AI-POWERED BELAY SUPERVISION SYSTEM

Techtopia

HIGHER  EYE

Find out more at
www.techtopia.eu/higher-eye



IF THERE'S ONE AREA THAT LAGS BEHIND AMONG ALL NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CLIMBING INDUSTRY FOR THE LAST 15+ YEARS - IT'S SAFETY. FOR MOST GYMS, A SAFETY POLICY STILL EQUALS A WAIVER SIGNED BY EVERY CLIMBER ENTERING THE GYM, INTRODUCTION COURSE AND SEVERAL PREVENTIVE POSTERS ON CLIMBING SAFETY PRACTICES.

Techtopia, a Bulgarian high-tech start-up, is on its way to change this with an AI-Powered Belay Supervision System specially designed for climbing gyms.

Thanks to the trained neural network (Artificial Intelligence) and Advanced Analytics technology, Higher Eye, as the system is called, provides an end-to-end video-based, real-time analysis of humans to detect, highlight and prevent potentially dangerous behavior in a climbing gym and ultimately - to save lives.

“The auto belay devices, by design, attract novice climbers and climbers who have come to the gym on their own - and both groups are associated with some higher risk”, says **Borislav Atanasov, Techtopia's CEO.**

The system works as an all-seeing camera device that recognizes a human approaching the climbing wall, follows and analyzes his actions

by observing multiple points on his body, and sets off an alarm in case the climber forgets to attach to the belaying system of the wall and trespasses a pre-set height. Such scenarios do happen on a daily basis not only to beginners. Happily, accidents are rare but they should not really happen at all.

Beyond its core function to sound an alarm and laser point a climber who is not attached to an auto belay device, Higher Eye features additional functions such as generating a heat map of the walls with statistics for the climbing lines so the gym owners can see which ones are preferred by climbers. Furthermore, the system provides detailed information about each line - average time to climb, where climbers drop most often, what areas are the climbers passing faster or slower.

Future features will include tailored information about each climber's performance, enabling them to see a recording of their climb and opti-

mize their strategy and moves. Another thing will be a Head-Up Display (HUD) for each climber that will project valuable real-time information that would be always in the sight of the climber.

A great advantage of the system is that it has no requirements for the end users, e.g. the climbers. This means climbers do not have to carry any sensors on their equipment to be visible to the system.

The Higher Eye requisites - cameras, laser pointers and alarms - are positioned on top of a pole system, either ground or ceiling mounted, providing a 360 supervision of the climbing zone. As an alternative, the camera system can be also mounted directly onto non-climbable sections of the wall.

Techtopia experts shall advise on the required number of cameras and their optimal location depending on the type of the monitored autobelays, light conditions and amongst additional factors - the design of the climbing walls. In general, an ideal location would be a central free-to-walk area, outside of the safety zones of the climbing walls.



There seems to be an assumption that mechanical failure is more common and more serious than human error. Actually, the opposite is true - accidents in climbing gyms are far more likely to happen due to human error and no matter how qualified the gym staff is. Even more so nowadays, when there are more climbers indoors than ever”

says **Borislav Atanasov, CEO of Techtopia.**

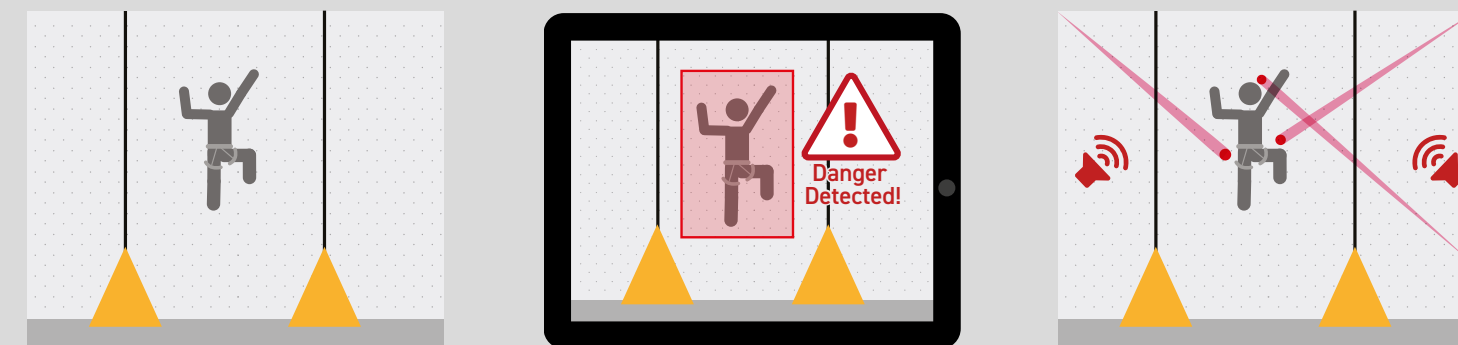
www.techtopia.eu

There is no limit on how many climbing lines can be monitored by one camera, provided that the camera has a clear view on the climbing line, in order for the system to recognize the autobelay webbings. As an in-built redundancy, multiple cameras observe the same lines simultaneously from various angles. The system also performs self-checks and informs the staff if a route is not monitored. For example, if the lens of the camera is too dirty, or there is a person standing in front of the camera and blocking its field of view.

In short, the Higher Eye developed by Techtopia empowers climbing gym staff with 360° surveillance inside the facility, detection of potentially dangerous behavior, and the ability to eliminate life-threatening scenarios. It is next-generation smart assistance for any gym,

and a digital upgrade of the belay gates most commonly used in facilities equipped with auto belays. Being currently installed and tested at the Walltopia headquarters facility, the official launch date for the Higher Eye is December 1st, 2022 and can now be pre-ordered at an early bird offer.

When a climber starts an unattached climb the system detects the movement and recognizes the danger. It immediately sound an alarm and lights a laser pointer at the climber in danger.



A conceptual illustration based on a photography of Climb Up Aubervilliers climbing gym.





DIRECT DRIVE

Direct Drive is the price leader in high-quality and high-performance auto belays. The lightweight and compact design make it easy to install, move, and manage at height. A rugged stainless steel and aluminum exterior protects precision components, making this versatile workhorse a top choice for operators and climbers.

SPEED DRIVE

Speed Drive sets the standard for high-quality and high-performance auto belays. Designed to be lightweight and compact with a lightning-fast retraction rate of more than 4.6m/s. Speed Drive is the auto belay of choice for competition and performance-oriented climbers and is the Official Auto Belay for IFSC World Cup and World Championship Speed Climbing.



LANYARDS

Perfect Descent Replacement Lanyards are durable, can be easily replaced without return service, and are offered in multiple connection type and length combinations. Replacement is a snap and can be completed in a few minutes. Have backup lanyards in stock to keep units in service with less downtime.

HIGH QUALITY. HIGH PERFORMANCE. HIGHLY CERTIFIED.

Perfect Descent Auto Belays are hand-built in the USA and certified to the highest auto belay standard in the world - 10x EN 341:2011 Class A. Each model features an all-aluminum and stainless steel outer case that protects precision high-wear internal components, including our exclusive redundant retraction design. Lightweight and compact construction, reliability, and low cost of ownership are just a few reasons why PD® is the auto belay loved by pro athletes, climbing gym owners, and everyday climbers. Available with 8.5m, 12.2m, and 16.1m lanyards and with steel, aluminum, dual, or sewn loop connections.

DUPLEX SPRING DESIGN

All Perfect Descent Auto Belays feature our exclusive Duplex Spring System: a split-coil design consisting of two independent power springs engineered for reliability and longevity. The Duplex Spring System introduces redundancy to the Perfect Descent retraction mechanism, making it the only auto belay that continues to retract the lanyard in the rare case of a spring failure.



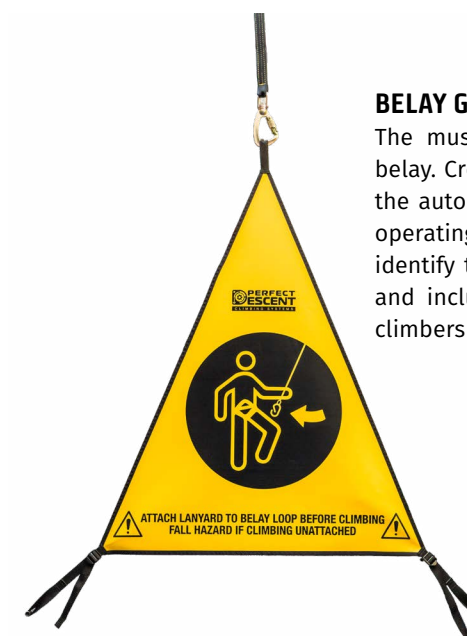
BELAY BAR MOUNTING KIT

Quickly anchor your Perfect Descent Auto Belays to most standard belay bars using the Belay Bar Mounting Kit. The wide nylon strap creates a stable and secure anchor that won't damage the bar's surface, and the choker-style design makes it easy to remove and relocate your auto belays. The included backup sling can be attached to any suitable secondary anchor.



BELAY GATES

The must-have companion for your auto belay. Create a convenient clip-in point for the auto belay when it's not in use during operating hours. Our belay gates clearly identify the auto belay routes in your gym and include graphics designed to remind climbers to clip in before climbing.



BODYGUARDS

Dampen noise and protect your auto belay and climbing wall from damage with the Bodyguard. Designed to provide optimal protection, the Bodyguard features durable padding that securely attaches to the auto belay. The best part is that the Bodyguard can be fitted and removed while the auto belay is mounted.



Bänfer[®]
SPORTMANUFAKTUR

WE KEEP YOU SAFE!

URBANSPORT PRODUCTS MADE IN GERMANY

Since 1984, Bänfer Sportmanufaktur has been producing, developing and selling sports mats and equipment for gymnasts and athletes for bouldering and urban sports such as parkour. With a production facility in Bad Wildungen in Germany, Bänfer Sportmanufaktur combines several production steps under one roof and has been one of the leading partners in the sports project business for many years, and well-known customers already appreciate that. Professional planning, conception and implementation - from a single source and everything made to measure, Made in Germany.

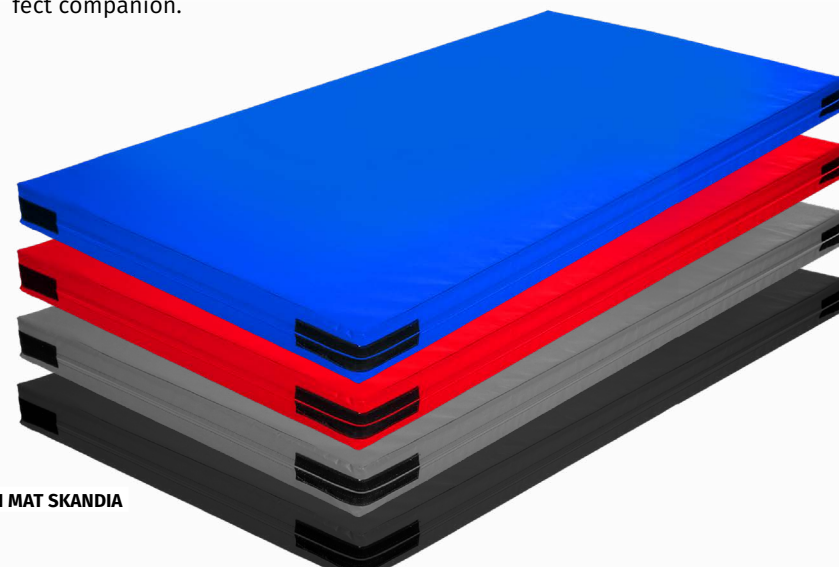
MADE-TO-MEASURE BOULDERING MATS

Minimizing the risk of injury is the top priority, indoors with carpet mats or optionally with tarpaulin and outdoors with robust tarpaulin mats in different color variations. The multilayer-core for indoor mats made of composite foam is attached to a softer PU foam layer and has a unique S-connection system that connects the cores almost seamlessly. The surface of the carpet mats is made out of needle felt which is put on top of the tarpaulin. This system combines the advantages of both materials - the carpet does not stretch out, remains stable and also offers a pleasant surface. On request, different materials for the surface such as tarpaulin and carpet can be combined along the wall as well as alternative core structures. Optionally, digital print tarpau-

lins with individual designs are also available, like for example in the Bachmair Weissach Arena in Kreuth. Here, the special design of the tarpaulin shows the contour lines of the surrounding mountains, see header image. For outdoor mats, a slatted frame bottom substructure is also available. This frame protects the mat from moisture and is also resistant to insects, bacteria and fungal infestation.

SINGLE MAT SKANDIA

For spontaneous climbing sessions or enthusiasts with climbing routes within their own four walls, the SKANDIA fall protection mat is the perfect companion.



FALL PROTECTION MAT SKANDIA

www.baenfer.de

But children also want to climb and do gymnastics. The SKANDIA mat provides the best possible fall protection for all ages, so that this can be done without injuries. Because of the multi layer foam sandwich core, the SKANDIA 100 / 150 is suitable for fall heights of up to 300 cm and because of its low height, it is an alternative to soft floors, too. On request also individual sizes and color variations are available.



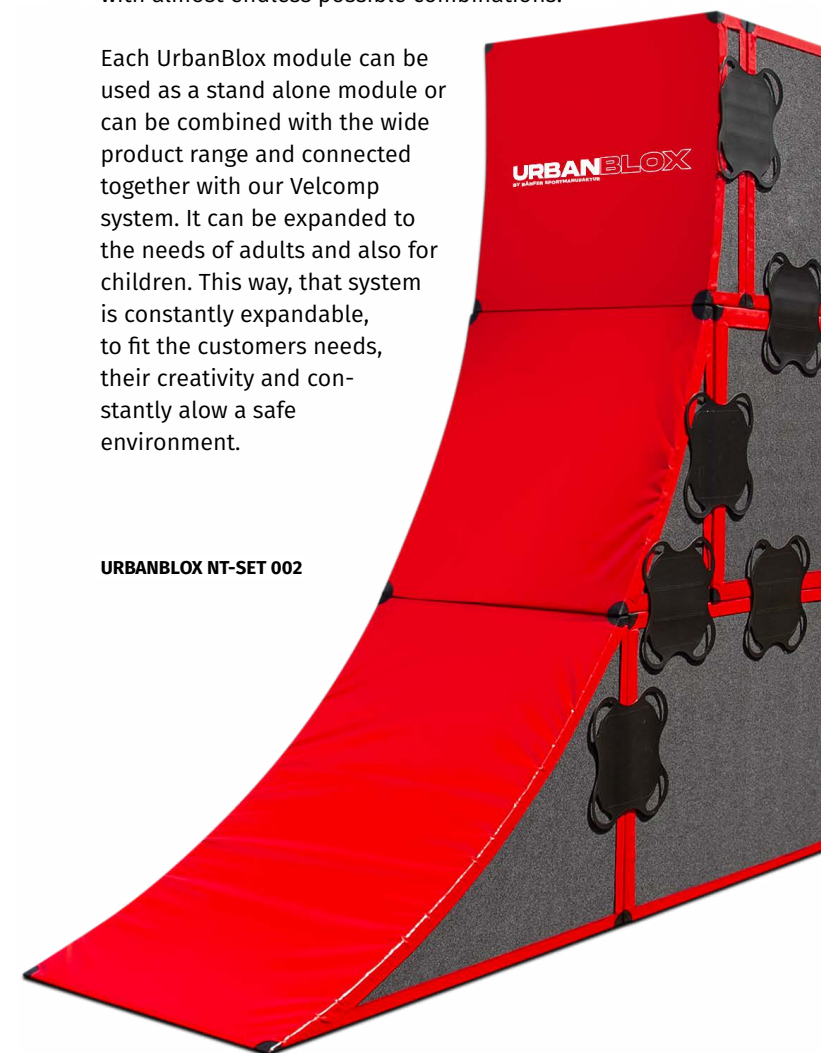
URBANBLOX MODULE

URBANBLOX SYSTEM

Urban and Ninja Parkour became more and more popular sport in recent years. Bänfer Sportmanufaktur is offering a range of high-quality modules specifically for Urbansports, for a safe environment paired with almost endless possible combinations.

Each UrbanBlox module can be used as a stand alone module or can be combined with the wide product range and connected together with our Velcomp system. It can be expanded to the needs of adults and also for children. This way, that system is constantly expandable, to fit the customers needs, their creativity and constantly allow a safe environment.

URBANBLOX NT-SET 002



The modules have been developed and designed with a true to nature usability in mind, to allow almost endless combinations and variations that can be found in a natural or urban environment aswell.



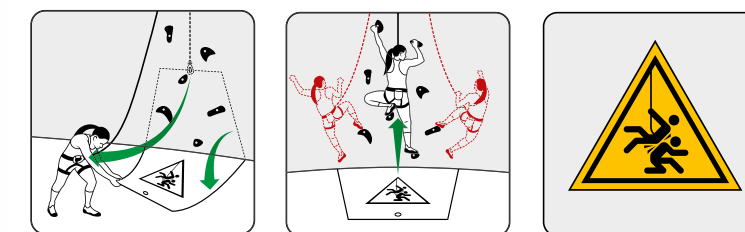
SAFETY MAT

AUTO-BELAY SAFETY MAT

The equipment of the climbing facilities with so-called self-belay machines continues to increase in popularity and with it the need for consistent safety standards. Obvious and save entry barriers at the bottom with a correct use are an important step for the future to avoid injuries and keep the athlete safe.

Brand new in our product range is the Auto-Belay mat - a safety device and at the same time an information sign for climbing gyms. In cooperation with our partner the DAV (Deutscher Alpenverein) we have developed and produced these robust entry barriers. The Auto-Belay Safety mats are intentionally large and trapezoidal with a height of 1.5 m and a width of 1.4 m on the ground. This Auto-Belay mats are designed to cover as many of the route entry areas as possible in order to prevent people from climbing past the route.

By using tarpaulin with a 1cm thick core, these safety mats are more stable, more durable and significantly more valuable. This means that the safety mat automatically stays flat on the ground while climbing and cannot be accidentally pushed or folded together. On the front of the Auto-Belay Safety mat, an explanatory picture indicates a self-check for hooking in and on the back, when the safety mat is in place, a pictogram warns „Caution: danger of collision!“ do not stay in the zone of the safety mat.



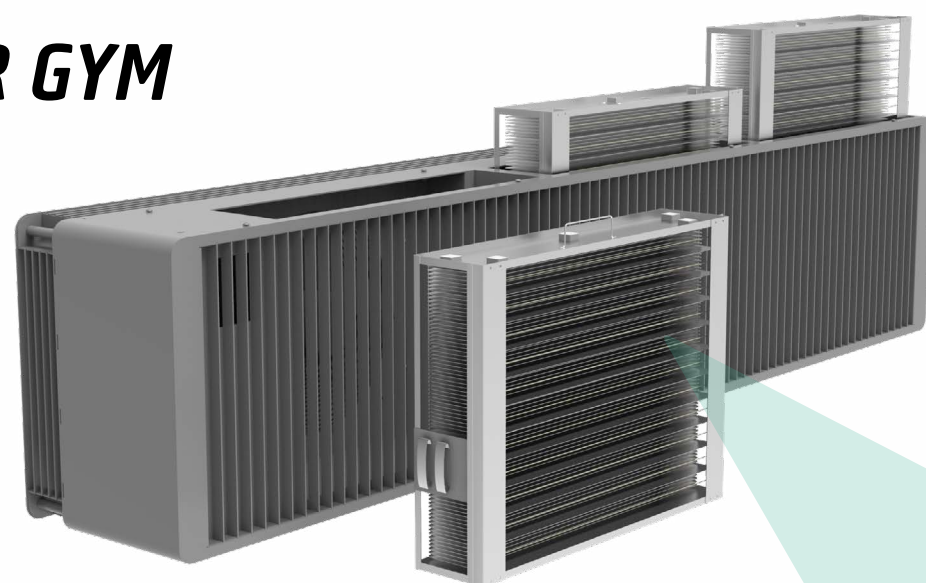
Need further information about our products or need help with a sports project? Our sales team **Andrea Rothe** and **André Friderrtzi** are keen to help you and answer your questions: bouldern@baenfer.de oder Tel.: 05621-7878-36

CLIMBLAB

www.climblab.dk



CLEAN AIR FOR YOUR GYM



**UP TO €5,000
IN ANNUAL SAVINGS**

Compared to conventional pocket filter solutions.

Chalk dust trapped in filter cassette

|| We feel a great responsibility to ensure clean and safe air for our everyday climbers, the national team and our staff. Having installed the ClimbLab filters our customers can see that we are serious about operating a state-of-the-art climbing gym.

We have now significantly improved the air quality, even at peak hours.

Mikkel Hojgaard Larsen, Bison Boulders

THE MOST EFFECTIVE FILTER SYSTEM FOR YOUR GYM

Our electrostatic filter technology combined with a high air flow fan ensures effective removal of chalk dust through out your gym. No unfiltered areas, no dead corners.

EASIEST FILTER TO SERVICE

Service only takes 5 minutes! With easy to remove cleanable filter cassettes our filters are fast and easy to clean. The cassettes can be cleaned and reused for years and years. No disposable filters.

MODULAR CLEANING SYSTEM FOR EVERY GYM

The best selling cleaning system on the market offers improved work flow, a safe working environment and huge savings.

To create a safe environment our pressure washing booth features a big extraction fan which draws away all harmful aerosols. With our cleaning systems and detergent there's no harmful fumes.

Whether you want an automated system or to manually pressure wash, we have the ultimate system for you.



Soak & Pressure Wash

Speed	● ● ● ● ○
Automation	● ● ● ● ○
Cleanliness	● ● ● ● ○

Ultrasound

Speed	● ● ● ● ○
Automation	● ● ● ● ○
Cleanliness	● ● ● ● ●

The Ultimate System

Speed	● ● ● ● ●
Automation	● ● ● ● ○
Cleanliness	● ● ● ● ●

|| Using the ClimbLab machines in person is even more impressive than all of the pictures and videos we watched during our research. Overnight, we have dramatically reduced our labour hours and water usage and have stunningly clean holds.

Drake Linscott, The Gravity Vault



DIRTY HOLDS
Crates optimise the work flow

SOAKING
Doubles cleaning capacity by reducing needed time in the ultrasonic cleaner

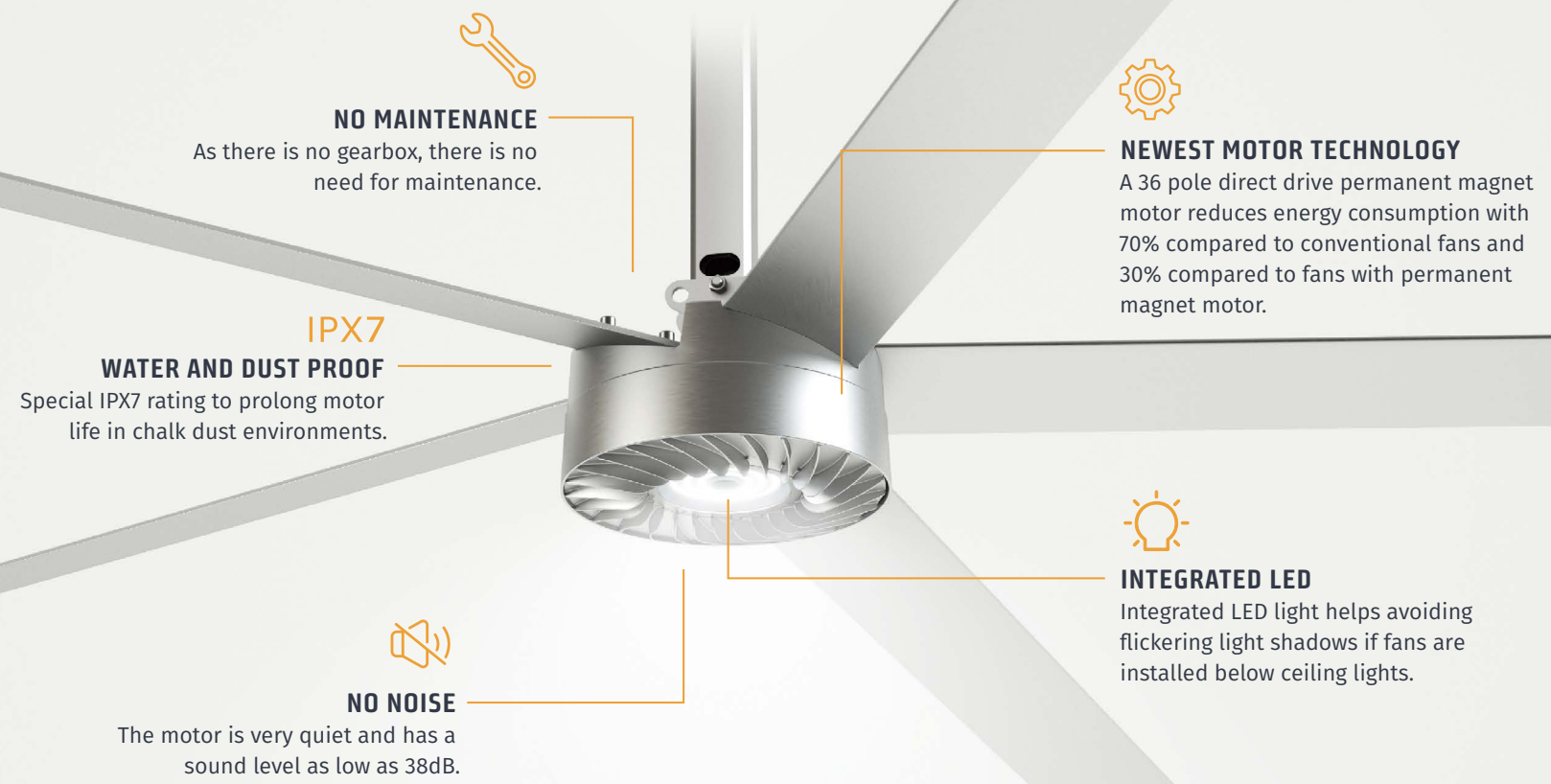
ULTRASOUND
Cleans up to 20 crates an hour and reduces water usage and workload

CLEANING BOOTH
Clean macros and volumes or rinse crates

CLEAN HOLDS
Crates optimize the work flow



UNIQUE CLIMBLAB TECHNOLOGY



ADVANTAGES OF HVLS FANS IN LARGE CLIMBING GYMS

||
We feel a much better homogeneity in the air temperature and also movement of air in different parts of the gym. We are very happy with the fans from Climblab.

Alexandre Marques, Altissimo Lisboa



SAVINGS ON HEATING COST DURING WINTER

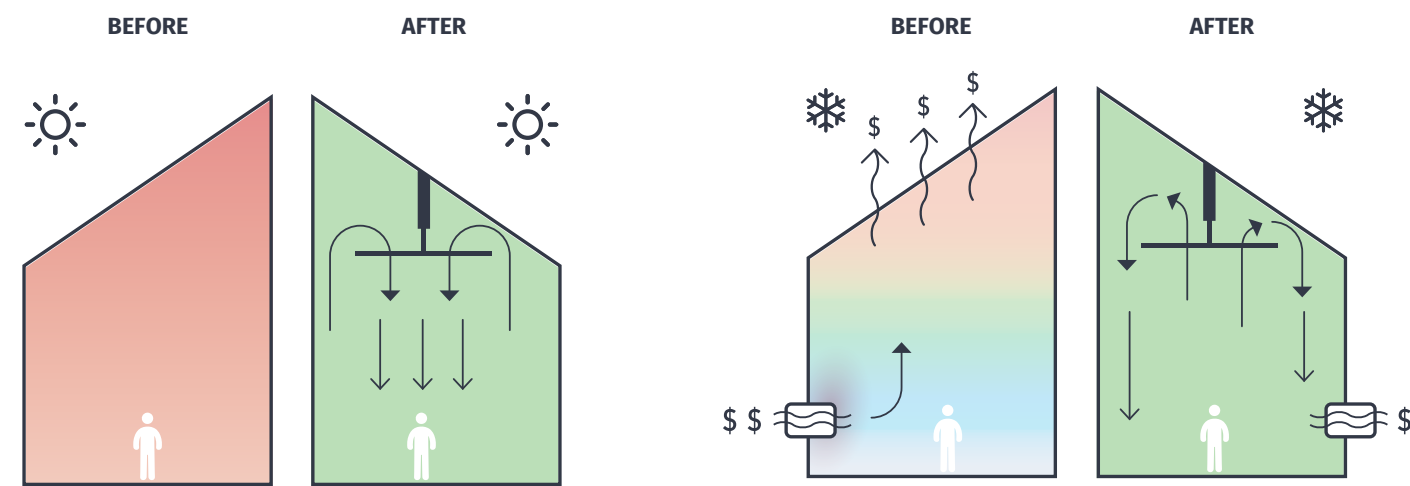
- » The temperature increases with up to 15 C° from floor level to ceiling in high climbing gyms. A HVLS fan ensures an even distribution of the heated air, so your heater uses less energy. This will save up to 40% on energy cost.
- » Heat losses are significant at high temperature difference between inside and outside. With a fan the warm air below the ceiling will be mixed with the cooler air from below. This ensures a lower energy loss through the roof.



COOLER CONDITIONS DURING THE SUMMER

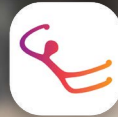
- » Poor insulation of roof and walls lead to high temperatures inside when the sun is out. With a slight draft from the fan the temperature feels up to 8 C° cooler. If you use air-conditioning you will be able to save up to 30% on cooling the air.

HOW DO HVLS FANS WORK?



SUMMER
During summer the fan creates a downward cooling breeze which makes the temperature in the room feel colder and gives a sense of fresh air. The perceived temperature feels up to 8 C° colder and will enable climbing gyms to save as much as 30% on air conditioning. One HVLS fan corresponds to 20 small fans.

WINTER
During cold winter periods the fan ensures an even distribution of the heated air in the gym. This enables the gym to reach comfort temperature at floor level using less energy. Uniform temperatures in the gym can save as much as up to 40% on heating.



Vertical-Life

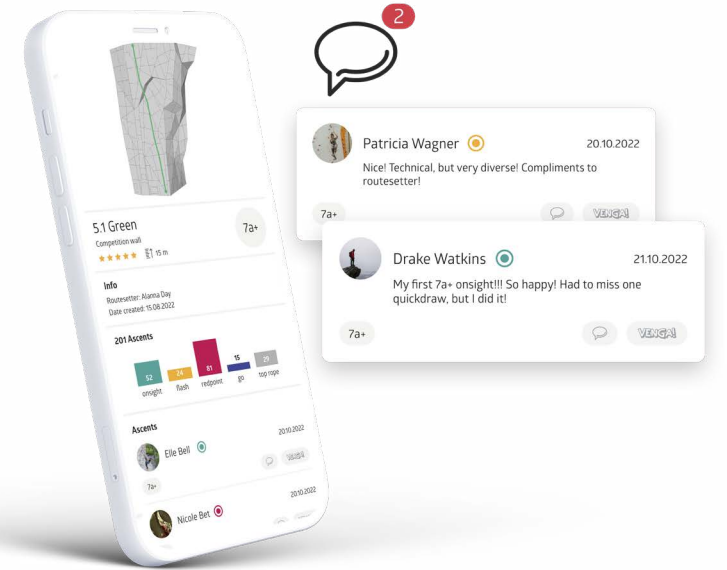


INDOOR TOPOS

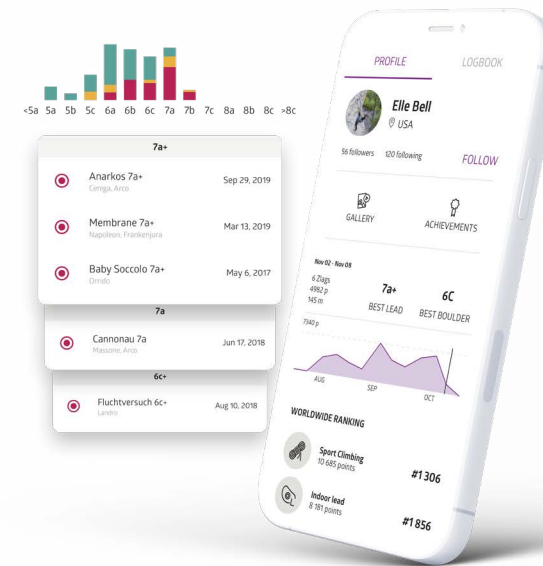
DETAILED GYM TOPOS & FEEDBACK

Vertical-Life's meticulous, one-of-a-kind topos make navigating a gym onsite or from the comfort of your couch a breeze!

- » Full gym map
- » Sector overviews
- » Route and boulder details
- » Add routes to your logbook
- » Comment and leave feedback for routesetters



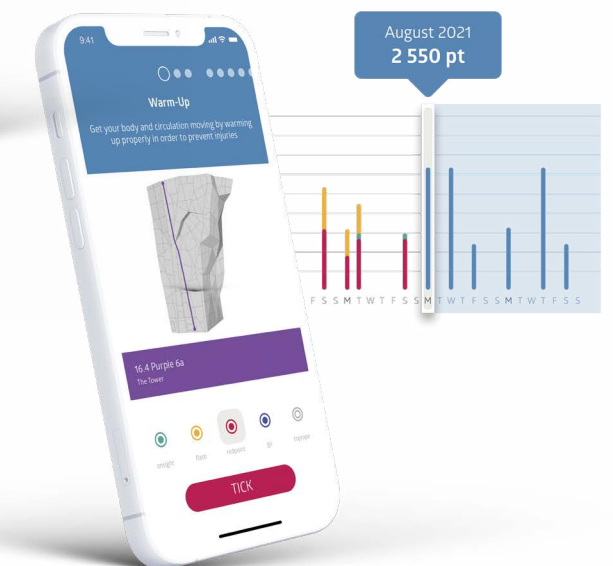
PERSONAL LOGBOOK & TRAINING



YOUR PROFILE

Tick any climb in the app and add tags and personal notes so you can keep a log of your best climbing memories. Logbooks are also great for training and tracking your progress.

- » Personal logbook
- » Statistics and insights
- » Rankings
- » Follow your friends



AUTOMATED TRAINING PLANS

Personalized training plans and workouts created based on current routes and boulder problems at the chosen gym.

- » 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.

The app 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.



2K+

GYMS
WORLDWIDE



1.6M+

ROUTES &
BOULDERS



12M+

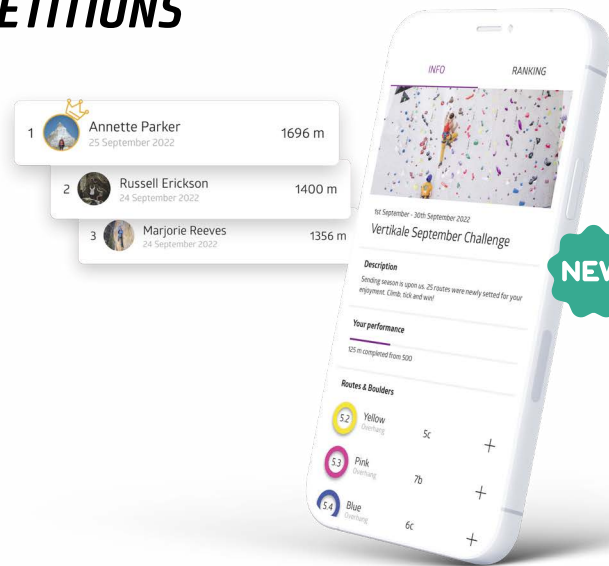
ASCENTS



390K+

Vertical-Life
USERS

COMPETITIONS



MONTHLY CHALLENGES AND RANKINGS
Multiple challenges are launched monthly by Vertical-life with prizes awarded by partnering sponsors.

GYM CHALLENGES
Give your climbers an authentic challenge! The flexible format allows you to select climbs with a simple click and rank participants based on points collected or distance climbed.

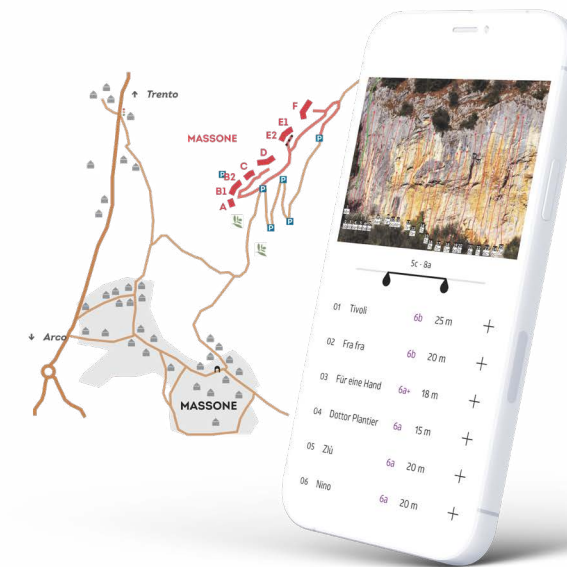
- » Custom challenges from the routes / boulders in your gym
- » Prize giveaway
- » Gym rankings
- » Worldwide ranking
- » Competition with friends

EXPLORE

MAP OUT YOUR NEXT SESSION
Whether you only have time for an impromptu gym session, or you are excitedly planning your next climbing holiday and trying your next dream line, our interactive map has you covered!



OUTDOOR TOPOS



QUALITY OUTDOOR TOPOS
All premium content provided by local guidebook authors and publishers.

- » Full digital topos
- » Route lists and details
- » Access and description info
- » Sector overviews
- » Easily search and filter
- » Comment and share



"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



NOFICATIONS
Never miss a new line! Notifications go out whenever new routes and boulder problems go up at the gyms you follow.



"My goal is to offer climbers around the world accessible, easy to understand information about Greek climbing. The Vertical-Life App is there to help me do it."

Aris Theodoropoulos
Author of climbing guidebooks for Greece & Kalymnos, mountain guide, climbing instructor



A CLIMBING GUIDE FOR YOUR GYM

MANAGE THE DEMANDS OF ROUTE SETTING AND COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CLIMBERS

The Smart Climbing Gym is a constantly-updated online climbing guide for your gym, generated from your route setting management entries, with the opportunity for climbers to give direct feedback to you. Climbers are notified when new routes and boulders are added.

ACTIVITY ANALYSIS

GYM ACTIVITY

Track your number of gym followers, the average grade climbed at your gym, the average rating of your climbs, your overall grade accuracy, and your most popular areas and climbs. Our software also gives you specific feedback and data for each of your route setters, from grade accuracy to route quality.

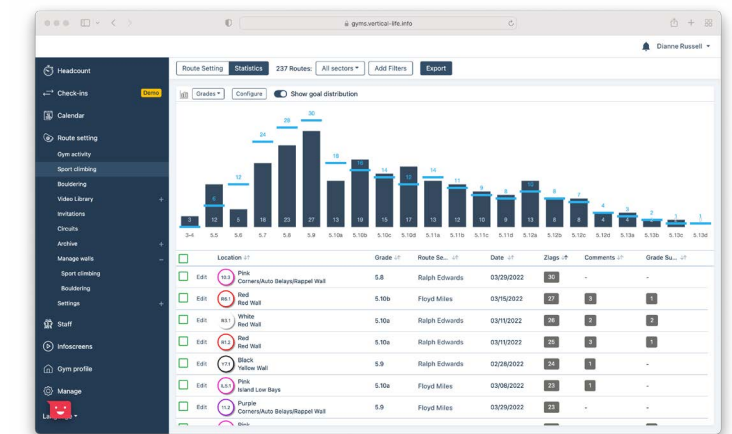
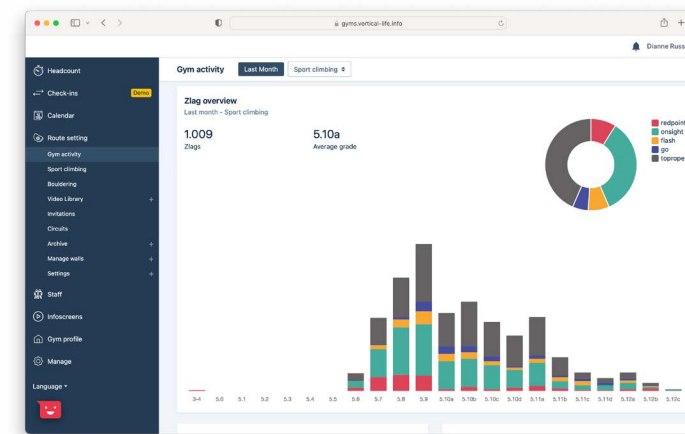
ROUTE SETTING INSIGHTS

Keep track of current and past route setting, volume and spread of your climbs by grade and sector, and set grade distribution goals in order to ensure the most variety and quality of climbs to your customers.

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.

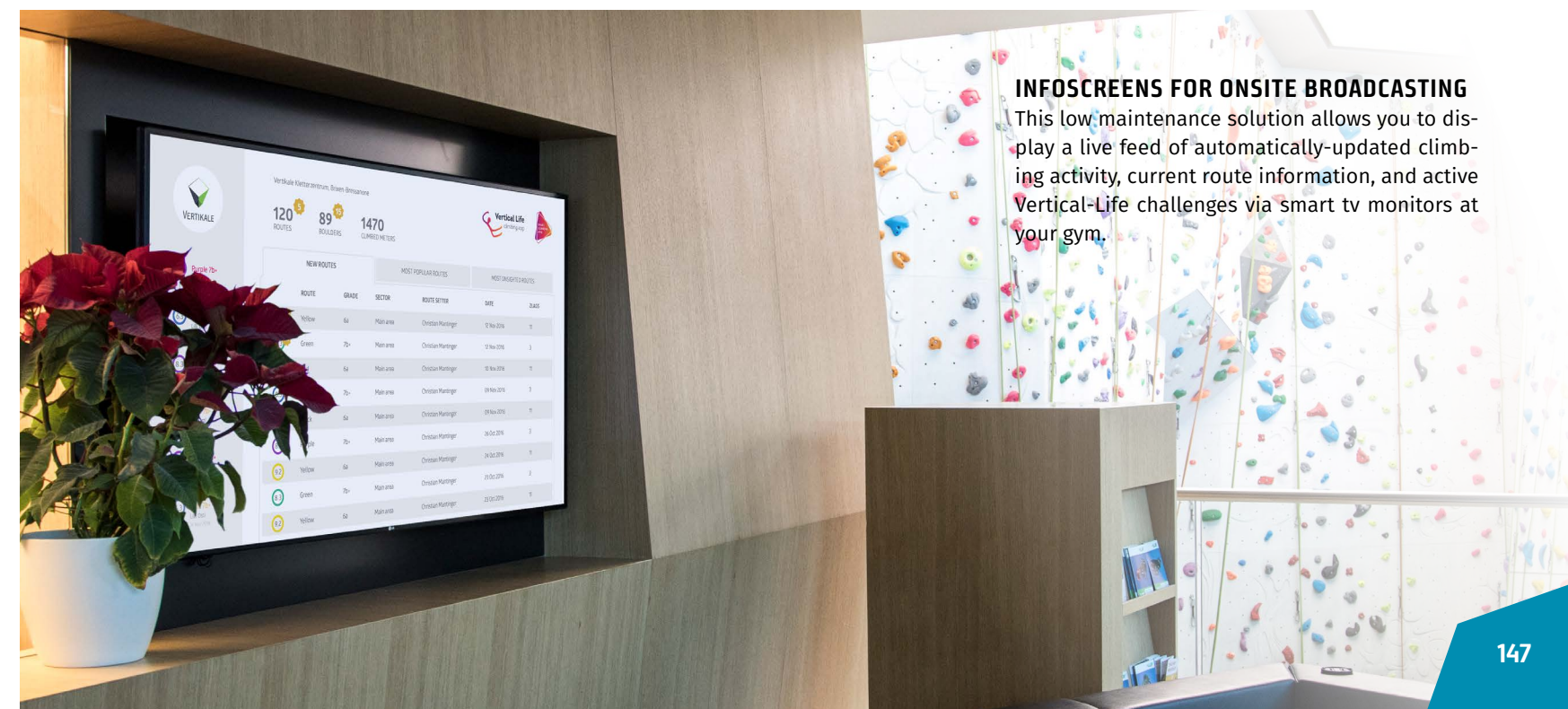


BOOKING MANAGEMENT SUITE

- » Check-in management system
- » Digital course booking tools
- » Customizable slot booking
- » Staff & task management
- » 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
- » Gym profile on Vertical-Life App
- » Headcount tracker



INFOSCREENS FOR ONSITE BROADCASTING

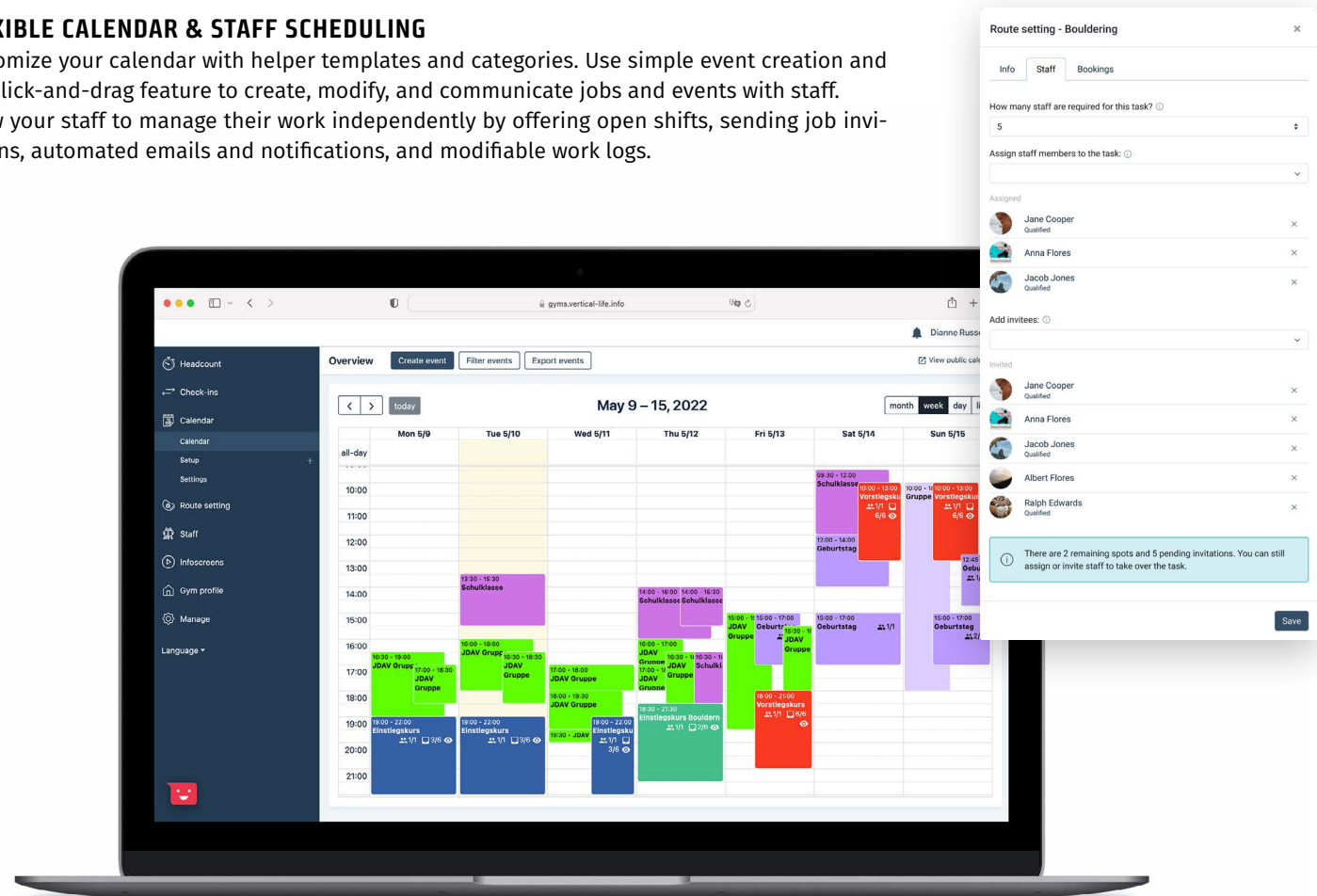
This low-maintenance solution allows you to display a live feed of automatically-updated climbing activity, current route information, and active Vertical-Life challenges via smart tv monitors at your gym.

STAFF MANAGEMENT: OPTIMIZE YOUR RESOURCES AND GAIN VALUABLE TIME WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

Complete staff-related task management, from daily front desk shifts to route setting assignments, climbing and fitness courses and events. Our system is flexible, easy to modify and set up, and enables your staff to manage their time and availability through their own login. Gather all of your staff's working hours in one place by automated calculation of your calendar's events.

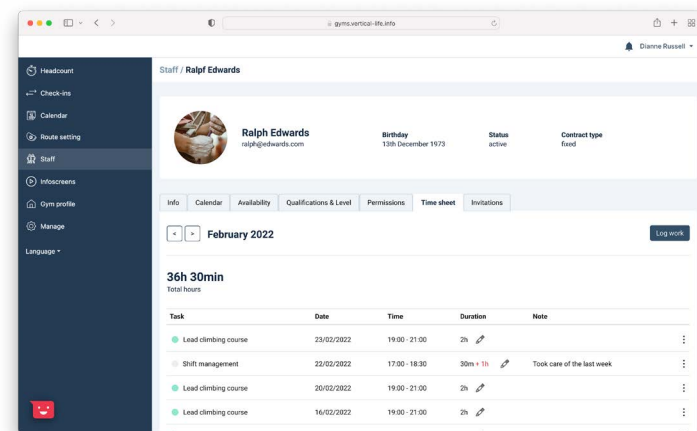
FLEXIBLE CALENDAR & STAFF SCHEDULING

Customize your calendar with helper templates and categories. Use simple event creation and our click-and-drag feature to create, modify, and communicate jobs and events with staff. Allow your staff to manage their work independently by offering open shifts, sending job invitations, automated emails and notifications, and modifiable work logs.



STAFF PROFILES & TIME TRACKING

Manage all of your staff members' data in one place, including contact information, qualified tasks, access levels, logged hours and more. Utilize the calendar for tracking all of your staff's working hours through automated calculation, derived directly from scheduled events.

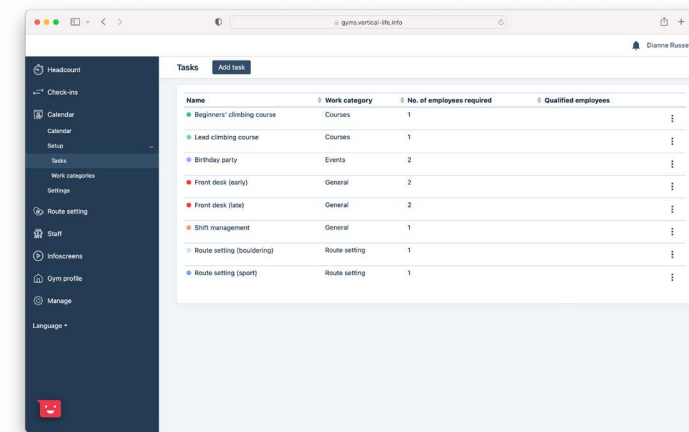


COURSE BOOKING: MEET YOUR CUSTOMERS' NEEDS THROUGH AN OPTIMAL BOOKING SERVICE AND MANAGEMENT TOOL

Create and coordinate online bookings and payments, promotions and staff scheduling with one integrated booking tool. Define your own framework, connect your staff to your events through intuitive profile features, publish your events to the public, and monitor your bookings with ease.

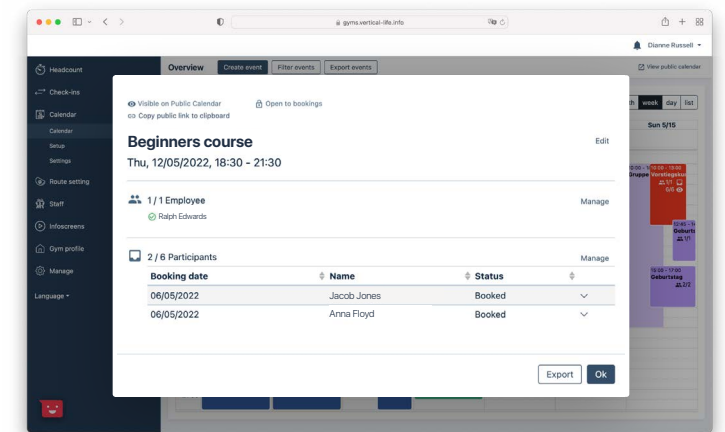
CREATE YOUR CUSTOM FRAMEWORK

Create the foundation of your calendar with categories for your courses, classes and events with multiple pricing structures.



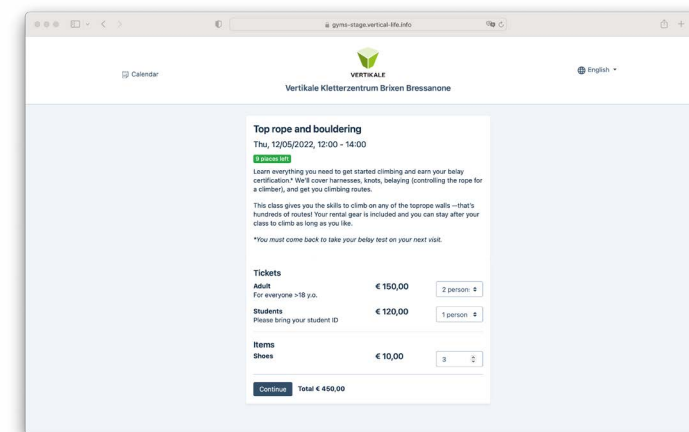
SCHEDULE STAFF

Seamlessly assign staff to newly created courses and events with pre-defined roles, permissions and qualifications in the staff profiles.



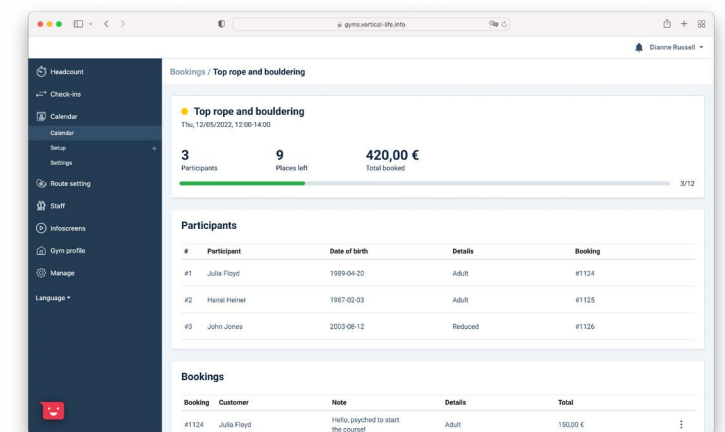
SHARE WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Open courses to the public for booking and reserving with a convenient public calendar link. Provide real-time information to your customers as you plan and modify courses and events.



TRACK AND MANAGE BOOKING ACTIVITY

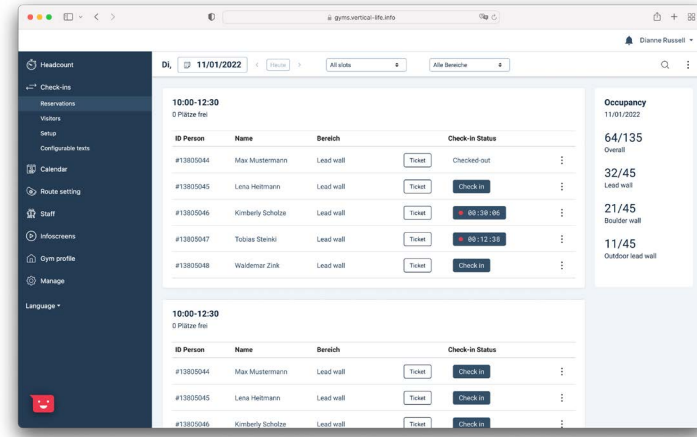
Manage your course registrations, payments and course capacities and make informed decisions based on your gym and customer needs.



CHECK-IN MANAGEMENT: MANAGE YOUR GYM'S OCCUPANCY AND CUSTOMER FLOW WITH INTUITIVE SET OF FEATURES

CHECK-IN MANAGEMENT & CUSTOMIZABLE SLOT BOOKING

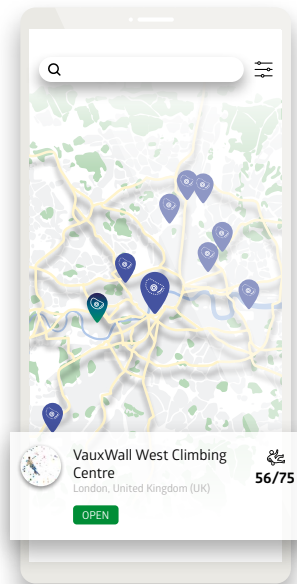
Your gym's entrance and the front desk will be crucial points when it comes to social distancing measures and will require a well-defined process. Our Slot-booking and Check-in feature will help you monitor and organize the visiting times of each individual climber and stagger their check-in and check-out times so that you can avoid large crowds and queues.



CLIMBERS CAN FIND YOUR GYM ON OUR INTERACTIVE MAP

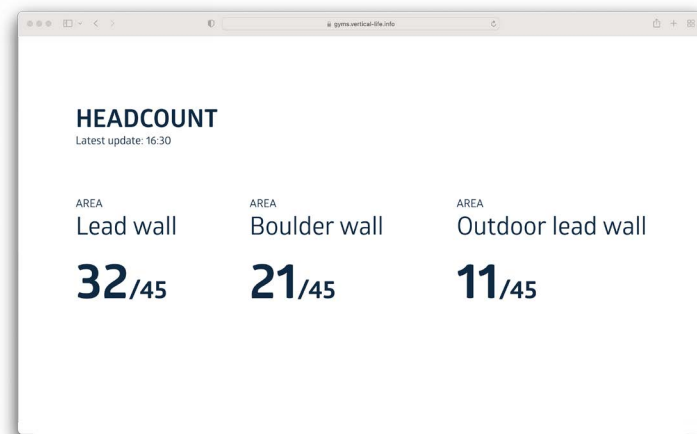
We've pinned all known gyms on our worldwide map in the Vertical-Life app. Get access to manage and update your gym's listing and opening times.

Don't see your gym on our map? Change that by emailing us at gyms@vertical-life.info.



HEADCOUNT TRACKER

Display your opening hours and current occupancy in real-time to climbers in the Vertical-Life app and on your website (easily plugged in with an iFrame). The headcount can be tracked manually by front desk staff, through check-ins via the slot booking feature, or automated by Boulderado POS integration (Boulderado customers).



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

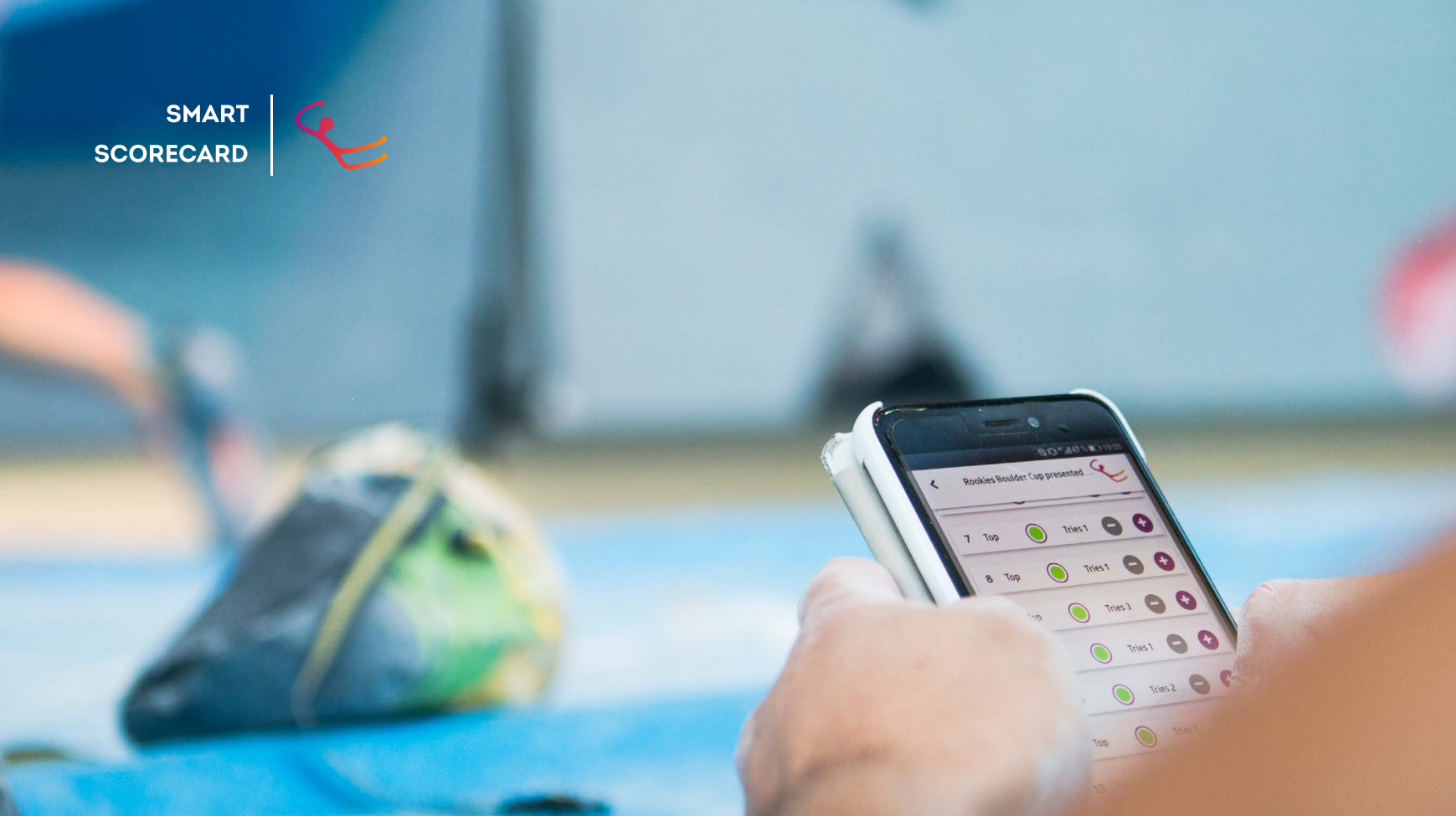
Form follows function. The focus lies on optimum visibility of the route information; the holder itself is almost invisible. The curved surface improves legibility when viewed from the side. The polycarbonate material is shock-resistant and robust, bendable, UV/ozone resistant and thus also suitable 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?

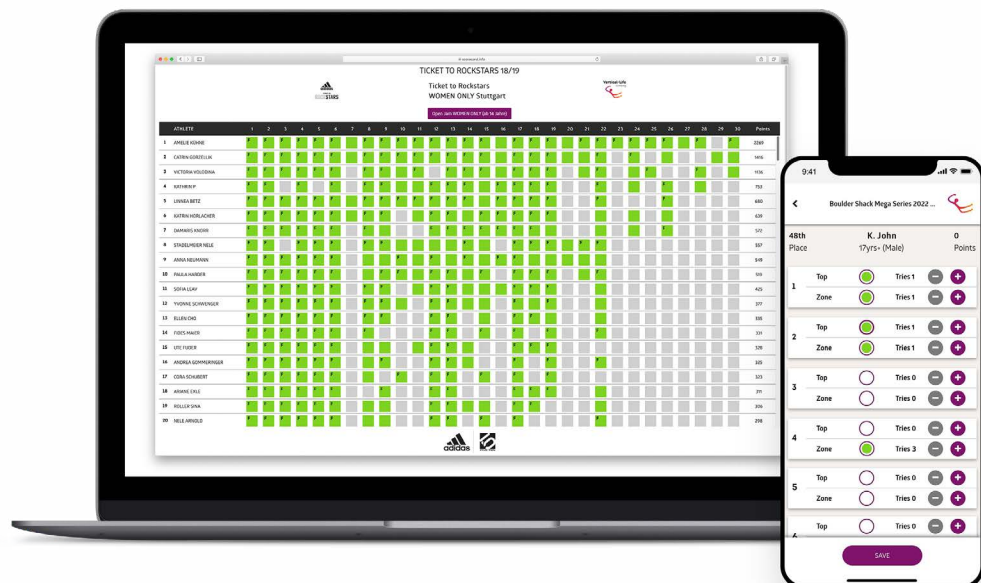
The Smart Scorecard by Vertical-Life puts an end to paper registration and scoring and offers a series of benefits for organizers and climbers.

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





"We've been using the Scorecard for three years now. As an event organiser, it saves the team so much time and hassle. The Scorecard is a real life saver for us. Thanks to its automated scoring, it helps us pull off 12 categories in the qualification rounds and finals with more than 500 participants in one day! It's super easy for our participants to enter their scores and they love the added benefit of live results, which we display throughout the gym during the events. I can no longer imagine putting on a comp without it!"


Mike Langley
Event organizer, Head Route Setter at the Castle Climbing Centre UK and IFSC commentator





"The Vertical-Life Smart Scorecard is an integral element of our global adidas Ticket to Rockstars event series, because it enables us to run our all-inclusive grassroots bouldering jams with a user-friendly self-scoring system. Our T2R Smart Scorecard includes tailor-made functions that were specifically developed for us based on our needs, like a voucher system, participant certificates or a loyalty program. It helps us to create sustainable events with a long-lasting consumer experience."

Mike Hamel
Event director Adidas Rockstars / Ticket to Rockstars series







NINJA TIMER

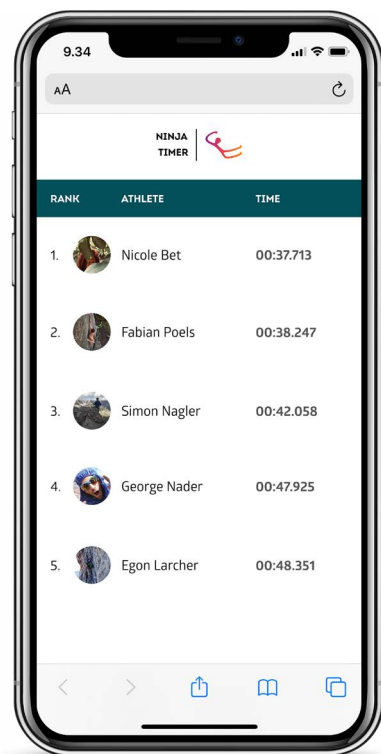
THE FIRST INTERACTIVE, CABLE-LESS TIMING SYSTEM DESIGNED FOR CLIMBING

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.

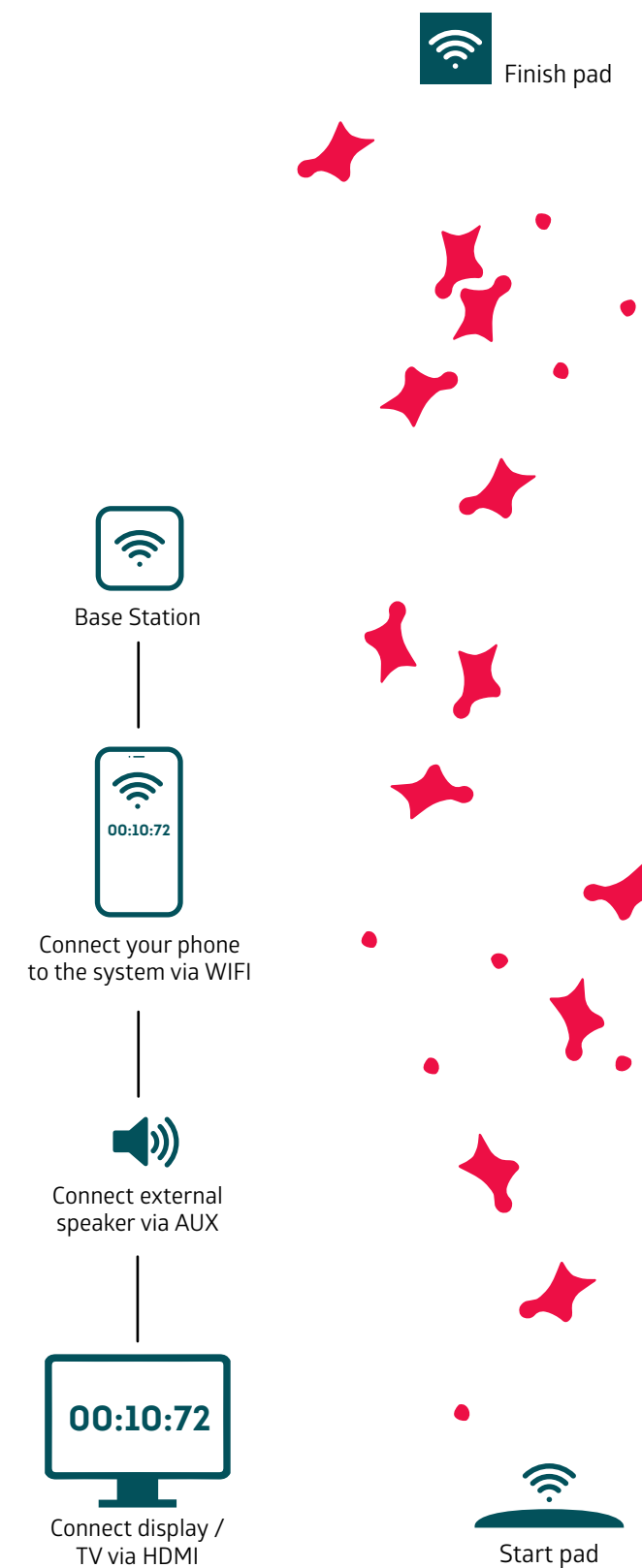
EFFICIENT TRAINING AND COMPETITIONS:

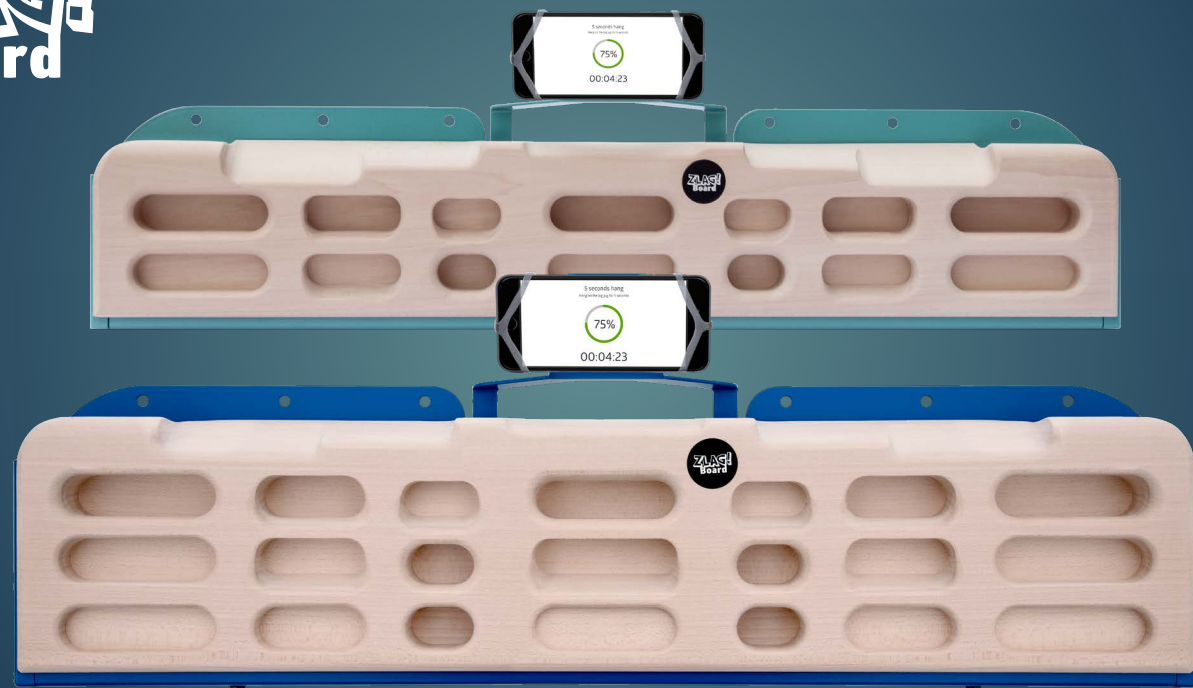
- » Coaches can set up speed sessions and monitor performances
- » Measures time to one-hundredth of a second and athletes' reaction time
- » IFSC compliant audio cue
- » Easy implementation of competitions & rankings



SIMPLE SETUP & OPERATION:

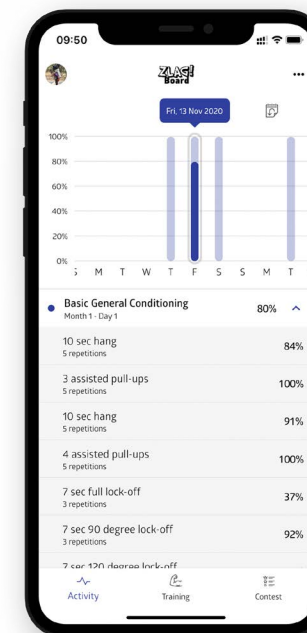
- » Portable, cable-less setup: assemble and disassemble in just a few minutes
- » Control via any smartphone, tablet or laptop
- » WIFI enabled, wireless timing system



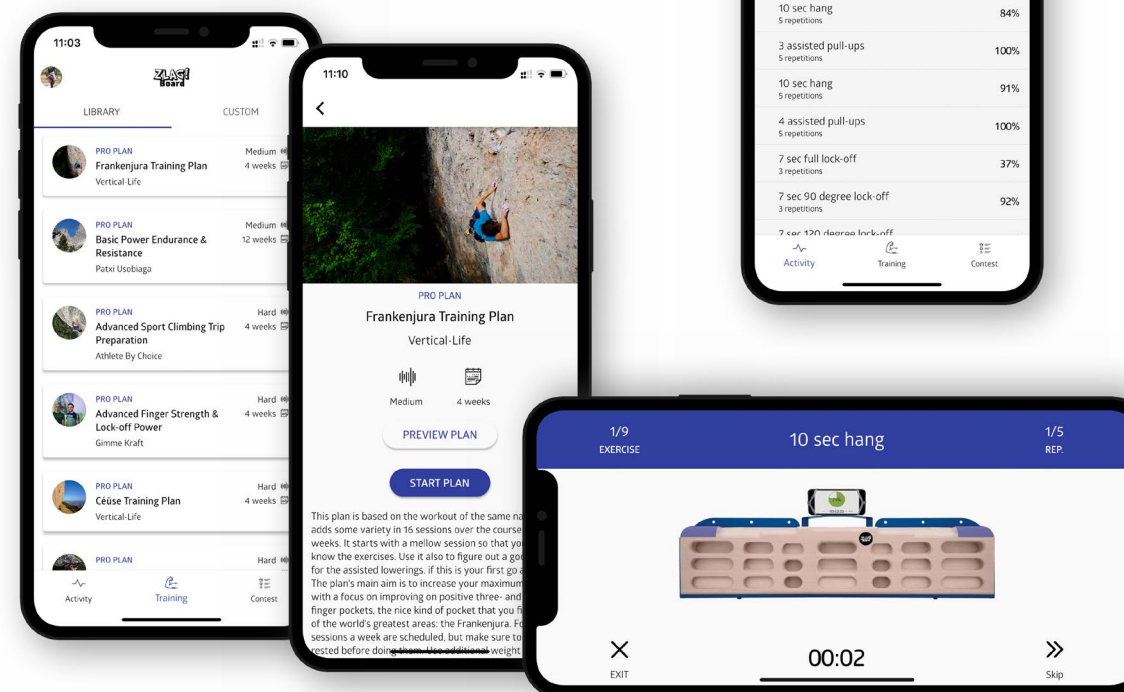


NEW ZLAGBOARD TRAINING PLANS

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



8 800 hours
hang-time

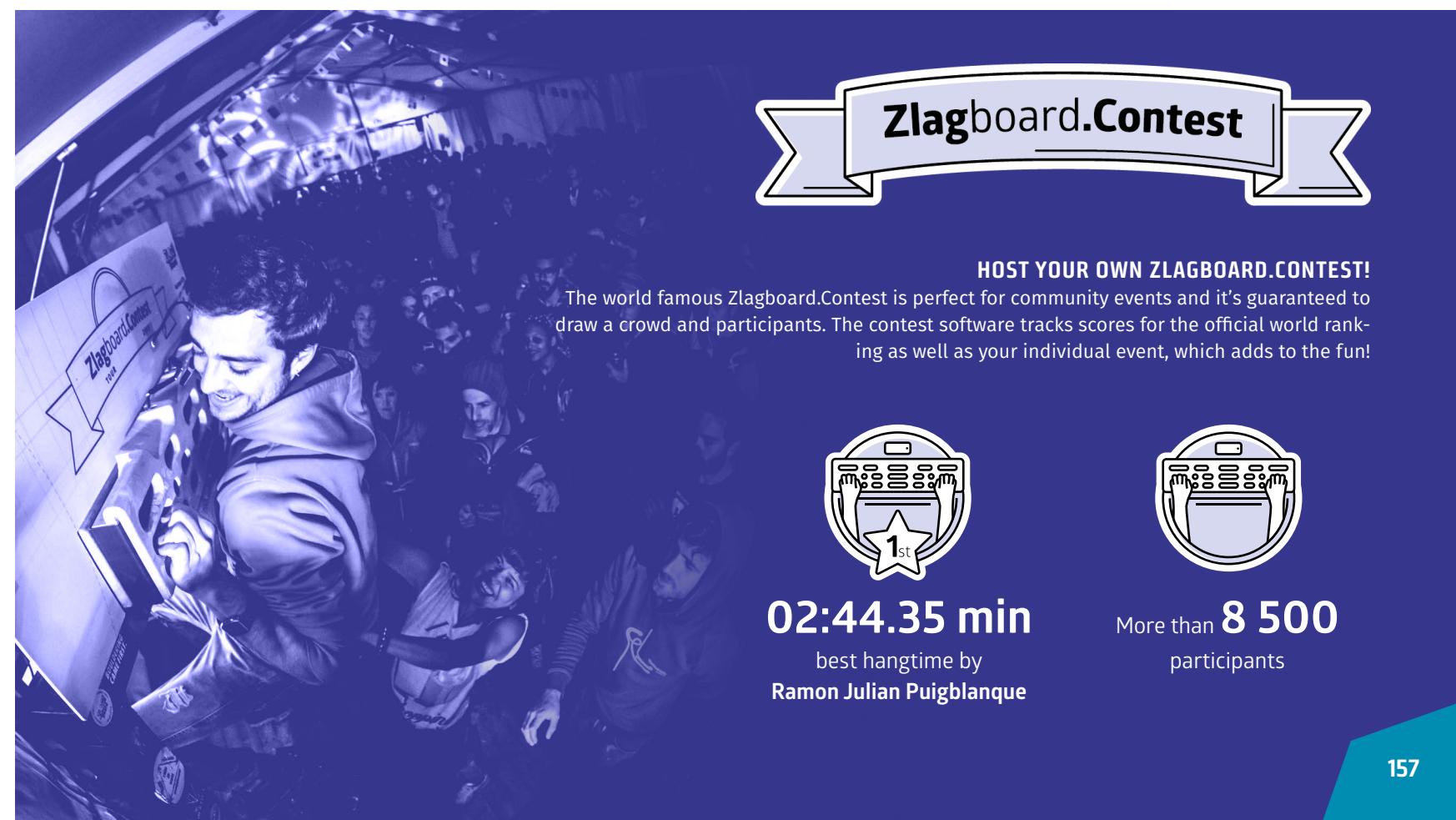


5 932 844
pull-ups



"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 Esmaeilzadeh
Pro climber, coach and route setter, Iran



Zlagboard.Contest

HOST YOUR OWN ZLAGBOARD.CONTEST!

The world famous Zlagboard.Contest is perfect for community events and it's guaranteed to draw a crowd and participants. The contest software tracks scores for the official world ranking as well as your individual event, which adds to the fun!



02:44.35 min
best hangtime by
Ramon Julian Puigblanque



More than **8 500**
participants



SMART BOARD

SMARTBOARD TRAIN SMARTER - CLIMB HARDER

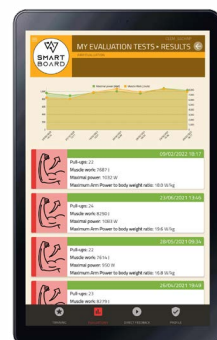
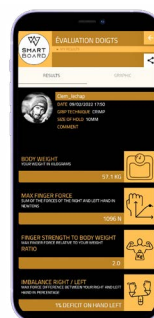
SmartBoard is a French company born in 2019 from the impulsion of two passionate climbers Laurent Vigouroux (researcher at Aix-Marseille University and outdoor route climber) and Clément Lechaptois (route-setter, outdoor bouldering specialist & mechanical engineer). Since 2002, Laurent published more than 20 scientific articles on climbers' biomechanics and physiology. SmartBoard uses the knowledge and protocols of those research to propose products for every climber interested about training, from beginners to high level. Based on force measurement with sensors, the SmartBoard offers climbers scientifically based training tools and programs readable by everyone.

mySmartBoard

mySmartBoard has been developed for individuals who want a high-end trainer at home. It is a sensor interface on which the user can set his favorite fingerboard. The idea is to give to a traditional and very popular training tool another dimension.

Trainings and tests are then adapted to each climber's hold. The sensors revolutionize the classic use of the hangboard. The direct feedback has a huge impact on the motivation, the fact that you can use your feet and still obtain scores makes the use much more fun. Evaluating both fingers and arms capabilities is unique and allows multiple exercises.

The mySmartBoard will officially be on the market by the end of 2022, both on iOS and Android.



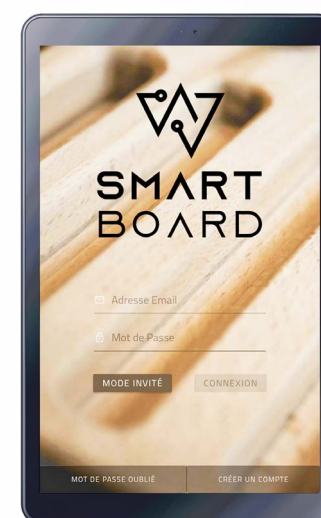
SmartBoard PRO

SmartBoard pro has been developed for professionals (gyms, clubs, trainers) who want to offer a high quality training device to climbers.

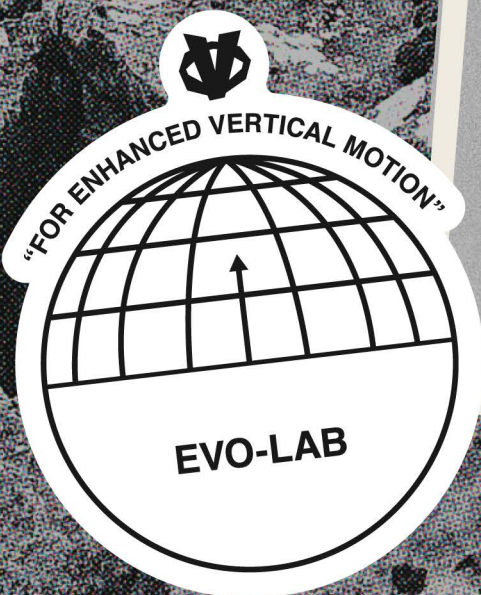
It has both a laboratory standard measurement accuracy and solid mechanical and electronic structures able to endure a 24/7 intensive use.

No matter if you climb 5b or 9b, yellow or black tape, the exercises are personalized to suit each user's own level thanks to 3 diagnosis tests. Our normalized scores allow to compare your own capabilities (power to body weight ratio, stamina level etc.) to other climbers having the same level and even with the very bests.

It includes, warm-up exercise, adapted training programs for finger strength, forearms stamina and endurance, arm's power and endurance. The product thus can be ideally combined with other training exercises and of course with climbing.



Evolutionary Laboratories



Explore the EVOLV
LOOKBOOK here



Vertical-Life

Your worldwide climbing guide



5 200+
Crags with tops



30 000+
Community
route lists



390 000+
Registered users



320+
Smart Climbing
gyms



2 000+
Climbing gyms

WALLTOPIA

Back to Basics with Natural Wood Panels

