



Coxsey and Chon Victorious at 2017 Vail World Cup

12-Jun-2017

Rock and Ice

In front of a packed crowd this weekend in Vail, Colorado Shauna Coxsey of Great Britain and Jongwon Chon of South Korea topped the podium at the one-and-only IFSC Bouldering World Cup held on U.S. soil. For Coxsey, it was her third gold medal out of the five competitions so far this season, and 10th of her career.

Petra Klingler of Switzerland (left) and Shauna Coxsey of Great Britain battle it out in qualifiers at the IFSC Bouldering World Cup in Vail, Colorado this weekend. Photo: Tim Foote.

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The world cup kicked off Friday during the GoPro Mountain Games with 59 men and 55 women in the qualifying round. The top 20 men and top 20 women moved on to semifinals held Saturday morning, and then the top six from each moved on to finals later that afternoon.

In finals, Coxsey secured first place with three tops in only four attempts, ahead of Akiyo Noguchi and Miho Nonaka, both of Japan, who topped three problems in six attempts and seven attempts, respectively. Coxsey also won the bouldering world cups in Nanjing, China and Meiringen, Switzerland earlier this season.

The U.S.'s own Alex Puccio took fourth place with three tops in 10 attempts. Katja Kadic of Slovenia came in fifth with one top in three attempts and Petra Klingler of Switzerland rounded out finals in sixth with zero tops and one bonus hold in two attempts.

On the men's side, Chon dominated the field by topping all four finals problems—the only competitor to do so—in nine attempts. Meichi Narasaki of Japan took second with three tops in six attempts and Yoshiyuki Ogata of Japan rounded out the podium in third with three tops in 11 attempts. Russia's Alexey Rubtsov took fourth with two tops in five attempts, and the Japanese climbers Kokoro Fujii and Keita Watabe completed finals with two tops in six attempts and one top in three attempts, respectively.

Team U.S.A. had a strong showing at the competition, and along with Puccio, Brooke Raboutou—for her first adult bouldering world cup—Megan Mascarenas, Meagan Martin and Lily Canavan all made it into the final round. Raboutou placed ninth overall, Mascarenas placed 15th, and Martin and Canavan came in a three-way tie with Leah Crane of Great Britain for 18th.

Also from the U.S., Carroll Chauncey and Kyra Condie placed 23rd, Grace McKeenhan 25th, Maya Madere 27th, Victoria Perkins 35th, Sierra Blair-Coyle 37th, Lisa Chulich

Results – Finals

Women

1. Shauna Coxsey (GBR)
2. Akiyo Noguchi (JPN)
3. Miho Nonaka (JPN)
4. Alex Puccio (USA)
5. Katja Kadic (SLO)
6. Petra Klingler (SUI)

Men

1. Jongwon Chon (KOR)
2. Meichi Narasaki (JPN)
3. Yoshiyuki Ogata (JPN)
4. Alexey Rubtsov (RUS)
5. Kokoro Fujii (JPN)
6. Keita Watabe (JPN)



and Alexis Mascarenas in three-way tie with Allison Vest of Canada for 39th, Molly Rennie 42nd, Lila Neahrng 43rd, Julianna Jimreivat 47th, Natalia Grossman and Audrey Miller 49th, and Isabel Gifford and Zoe Steinberg 51st.

On the men's side, Sean Bailey was the only U.S. male climber to qualify for semifinals. He placed 11th overall. Following Bailey, from the U.S., Michael O'Rourke placed 23rd, Shawn Raboutou 25th, Nathaniel Coleman 29th, Kai Lightner 31st, Solomon Barth 33rd, Peter Dixon and Kyle Struthers came in a three-way tie with Hannes Puman of Sweden for 35th, Ben Hanna 38th, Palmer Larsen 42nd, Brian Antheunisse 43rd, Brendan Mitchell and Charlie Schreiber 49th, Ryan Copeland and Andrew Lamb 53rd, Nicholas Picarella 55th, Tristan Chen 57th, and Joel Zerr 59th.

In Rock and Ice's hangboard competition between semifinals and finals, Kestrel Pikiewict, of Louisville, Colorado topped the leader board for hang time on the two-finger pocket with a time of 1 minute 46 seconds She also won

last year. For the quarter-inch edge, Jake Kibbee, from Parker, Colorado, took first with a hang time of 51.73 seconds. Pikiewict and Kibbee each earned a free year-long subscription to Rock and Ice.

With five of seven IFSC Bouldering World Cups in the books, Coxsey, who has claimed three victories so far, leads the overall bouldering world cup rankings with 435 points, ahead of Janja Garnbrete of Slovenia with 370 points and Nonaka with 297 points. For men, Watabe holds a slight lead in the overall rankings with 332 points, ahead of Chon with 326 points and Rubtsov with 307 points.

The next and penultimate IFSC Bouldering World Cup will take place in Navi Mumbai, India on June 24 and 25. Check back for live streaming of the events.





Alex Honnold, Freerider and What It All Means for Climbing

07-Jun-2017

Francis Sanzaro

When Alex Honnold topped out on El Cap's Freerider (5.12d) this past Saturday donning a chalk bag, shoes, and ear-to-ear grin he wrote the closing sentences in a chapter begun on November 12, 1958. Let's call the chapter "El Cap," and the book "Yosemite Rock Climbing." Warren Harding, Wayne Merry, George Whitmore, and Rich Calderwood started the chapter when they first climbed The Nose in 1958 after over two years of effort. Now, Honnold has climbed El Cap solo, no rope, sub four hours. What just happened?

Of course, as is often the case, there is what we imagine happened, and then there is reality. The myth is of the soloist conquering death, wrestling with demons, getting pumped full of adrenaline but barely evading the Grim Reaper by some sliver of fate ... treading so close to life's outer limits as to taste the nectar of the most secret fruit, you know, the hero's struggle, fortitude, bravery, valor. One would think that to pull this off Honnold would have to spend the week prior eating purified pine berries and the bark of bonsai trees, sitting in lotus position most of the day meditating on his muladhara chakra and steeling his mind against any and all unwanted intrusions.

But reality is different, and Honnold is keen to give you reality—in a post-send interview with Rock and Ice Honnold said that he bouldered the day before and hiked with his mom. Later that day, he watched the new Hobbit movie, he said in another interview. That night, when you'd expect his nerves to be suffocating, he slept "like a baby." During the climb, the Monster Offwidth pitch felt like a "cruiser," and he admitted to thinking about climbing something "hard" during the solo. That afternoon, he did some hangboarding. Post-send, he was amped to do it again.

For most, what Alex did is lumped into the class of images/acts of individuals walking across high-wires without a back-up, or of once-popular public stunts performed over town squares or piazzas. Think David Blaine. Images of free soloing are shocking, confrontational, and always framed with a certain vertigo: the ground drops out beneath the climber, and the interplay between the climber's position vis-a-vis the ground is where the dark art of soloing saturates these images. It's an existentialist photography. Soloist imagery is panic inducing, and I say this because neuroscience research has found that when we look at images of people in certain positions, our brains activate as if we are in that position. The soloist's art is that everyone and no one can relate to it.



Even Honnold's longtime friend and partner, Tommy Caldwell, can't relate, writing: "As one of his closest friends and an El Capitan addict myself, you would think I would have a handle on what it would mean to free solo the Freerider.

But I don't. No one does. Except Alex." In the tradition of John Bachar, Peter Croft, Michael Reardon, and Dean Potter, the great soloists come around every decade or so, appearing, much as Honnold initially did in Camp 4, like pieces of wilderness in our otherwise chartered territory.

Ironically, the achievements of soloists reside nowhere but in legend and lure—not in the route itself, since hard soloing rarely requires new development or a first ascent, nor in a bolt, nor a belay station, nor a topo. Often, there's not much to say. Case in point with Honnold. The soloist leaves nothing behind—not a route name, nor a number, nor a time—just as they ask little from a climb. Bolts, belay stations, gear beta—it doesn't mean anything to a soloist. True, we are left with words, images and video, but the most impactful is a type of anti-knowledge about the experience. We want to understand, but we can't. It's not possible. Something occurred on Freerider that we aren't privy to. That experience is his alone.

For climbers, Honnold's solo was the "obvious" next step in free soloing, but paradoxically we never thought it would happen. For Honnold, however, it was a clear goal, with achievable training milestones, and he knew just how to get himself to the point where making the approach to El Cap with only a chalk bag didn't feel like suicide. It's not conquering the impossible, but an exemplar of the application of a steady hand and mind to a singular goal over seasons and years.

I appreciate Honnold's demeanor, his wide-eyed smile and terse Big Lebowski'isms regarding those who constantly ask him, "Don't you know you did the most badass thing ever?" "Do you know how epic you are?" With each attempt to get him to lower his head, Honnold shrugs. "What the world needs is for the U.S. to stay in the Paris Accords," he replies. He may be right, although climbing does inspire, and inspiration has a trickle-down effect. Within our chalky piece of the sporting world, a free solo of El Cap does matter, and we are lucky to have Honnold as our ambassador to put it into a global perspective.

In 1967 in Ascent Lito Tejada-Flores published "Games Climbers Play," a short essay about ethics in genres of climbing. He writes that climbing at its most complex is the Expedition Game, where it's OK to have people port your gear (sherpas), tug on ropes, use oxygen, and so on. At the most simple, the Bouldering Game eliminates "protection but also companions." It's a sliding scale, and the ethics shift with advances in gear, ability and knowledge. Accor-

ding to Tejada-Flores' definitions, Honnold just applied the Bouldering Game to the Big-Wall Game. In essence, he went big-wall bouldering.

Likewise, "fair means" alpinism, exemplified by Ueli Steck's vision for his Everest-Lhotse project, is another example of migrating ethics—i.e., applying (alpine) soloing to the Expedition Game. Like the mantra of environmentalism, the "leave no trace" philosophy is being applied everywhere in climbing, at all levels. This is what is happening. Our sport's "progression" relies on an accepted minimalist philosophy, one that echoes with Antoine de Saint-Exupery's famous assertion: "Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."

Jon Cardwell, Sasha DiGiulian and Marcus Garcia Free Yosemite's Misty Wall

31-May-2017

John Long

On May 27, 2017, Jon Cardwell, Sasha DiGiulian and Marcus Garcia completed the first continuous free ascent of the Misty Wall (5.13a), via a roof variation, in Yosemite Valley, California. The original aid line up the iconic 1,700-foot big wall was first climbed by Royal Robbins and Dick McCracken in June 1963.

Garcia and Cardwell had freed all 15 pitches last September using a variation that busts dynamic moves out a big roof (see photo), followed by 5.12 face climbing to an exposed hanging belay, before the line rejoins the original Misty Wall route. The next pitch tracks a spectacular 5.11+/12- splitter crack up the 95-degree headwall, ending on Party Ledge. Then a short 5.7 chimney to the top. Winter came, however, before the pair could tick the whole shebang in one go.

The climbing—which largely follows the steep, sickle-shaped corner several hundred feet right of Yosemite Falls—is stout, at 5.13a; but the bigger challenge is linking all the pitches in a mega-endurance push.

This year, Cardwell (one of the few climbers worldwide who boulders V15 and leads 5.15) and DiGiulian (recently returned to 5.14 form,) were both coming off strong seasons sport climbing and training in Spain. But during their two days of sessioning the route prior to the send, DiGiulian could only manage short sections of the thuggish roof pitch, and was never close to linking it.

During the push, when they reached the crux roof from the ground up, they had only 90 minutes of light left, and DiGiulian was wasted from the 5.10 squeeze chimney and several 5.11+ pitches below. Yet she went for the lead and powered through the roof on her first try. She later said she



only had one go left in her, so she put it all on the line for the send.

The team needed most every ray of daylight to complete the push, topping out 14.5 hours after starting at the base that morning.

The long hike down the Yosemite Falls trail, which they managed in the dark with headlamps, is all swirling mist and spray from the gusher, roaring like Kingdome Come. For a cranker, airball thriller, with unique features on diamond-hard stone, the Misty Wall might be hard to beat.



The New Adaptive Foot: A Step Forward For Adaptive Climbing

09-May-2017

Harriet Ridley

This time last year Craig DeMartino and Matt Hulet were driving to Chris Sharma's launch party at Sender One in L.A. and were discussing adaptive climbing. "Hulet asked me what one of the biggest challenges for amputee climbers was," says Craig DeMartino, a professional adaptive climber and coach based in Colorado, "I told him the [specialized prosthetic] foot was really expensive, and when I taught folks to climb, they wanted the same kind I used but the price kept people away."

DeMartino climbing on the new EAF in Croatia during the development of the product. Photo: Cyndy DeMartino.

That conversation with Hulet, Brand Manager for Evolv, sparked a yearlong design project, and last month Evolv revealed the result with the release of the company's new Adaptive Foot, designed to be an affordable option for lower-limb amputees wanting to get into or improve their climbing.

High manufacturing costs and insurance charges, often reaching thousands of dollars, mean that sport-specific prosthetics are economically infeasible and a barrier for most adaptive climbers.

"I was going to national level events, and seeing amputees climb with cut 2 x 4's and some rubber glued to it being used as climbing feet," Hulet stated in a press release. "I knew we had to find a better option."

Evolv has had a longstanding relationship with the adaptive climbing community, and counts more than a dozen adaptive athletes on its elite, national and international teams. The company worked closely with several adaptive athletes, including Demartino, Ronnie Dickson [see video below] and Malcolm Daly, when designing and testing the

Adaptive Foot.

In 2007 Evolv partnered with TRS Prosthetics to develop the Eldorado Z-Axis Climbing Foot and Eldo Zclimbing shoe. However the entry price for this foot, which is classed as a medical prosthetic, is around \$1,200 and is not covered by insurance, rendering it unattainable to many.

Hulet, who has a personal interest in adaptive climbing through his work with amputee veterans, was a driving force in bringing the Adaptive Foot to market. He says "The design was not the main challenge; the bigger challenge was to make the Adaptive Foot affordable. Normal prosthetic feet cost between \$1,000 and \$1,400 and are not covered by insurance. This instantly closes off climbing to a large number of amputees and adaptive climbers."

The new low-cost Evolv Adaptive Foot designed specifically for climbing. Photo courtesy of Evolv.

Evolv Eldo Z climbing shoe and the new low-cost Adaptive Foot. Photo: Malcolm Daly.

At \$200, the Adaptive Foot is priced with no major profit margin and will only be available directly through Evolv, not through third-party retailers, in order to keep the cost low. It is also not officially classed as a prosthetic, which helps minimize cost. It is designed to be light and unrestrictive, and to increase performance on the rock. The combination of the foot shell and Evolv's Eldo Z shoe, which fits it perfectly and features sticky Trax rubber, allows climbers to use their feet on all varieties of terrain.

Features of the Adaptive Foot, according to the company,

include: a short overall length that helps the climber to smear and high step without the foot rotating and popping off; a symmetrical round toe, which removes left/right foot differences and helps allow use on all types of terrain; and a high forward arch so that the adaptive climber can hook the foot over a high edge, then roll up onto it.

"This foot and the shoe make a huge difference in my climbing," says DeMartino. "I've climbed harder routes with this foot than I climbed as an able-bodied climber! That might say a lot about my footwork when I had all my appendages ... but the foot is amazing!"

DeMartino hopes that the Adaptive Foot will benefit almost any level climber in the adaptive community: "If you're just starting, it gives a great platform to learn the movement of our sport. If you're an advanced climber, it gives a great platform to generate power and stability and complete harder routes."

Adaptive athlete Kate Sawford trains symmetry on her home woody using a personalized foot that she made. Photo: Chew Wei Chieh.

Kate Sawford, a Canadian living in Australia, should be receiving her new Adaptive Foot in the next few weeks. Sawford has been an avid climber for a decade and is a three-time World Paraclimbing Silver Medalist, taking second place in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 World Championships. She lost her left leg to cancer as a child and first took up climbing in 2007.

"When I first started I was shoving a climbing shoe onto a [prosthetic] walking foot, which was terrible," says Sawford. "You can't get over the toe on a walking foot. They roll off things. Also, there's no movement in the ankle, which also prevents putting weight through the toe."

When asked about the challenges she faces in climbing, Sawford says: "I am very dominant on the non-amputated side of my body, and this affects movement patterns. I use a systems board to train symmetry every time I train. This helps push my limits about what I can get out of my left foot. Part of that is having the right tools."

Sawford has tried the previous Eldorado Z-Axis Climbing Foot and the Evolv Eldo Z shoe, but opted to create her own, making a more flexible foot using a kid's prosthetic that she cut to size and which Evolv later covered with its rubber.

She hopes that this affordable EAF will help to make adaptive climbing more accessible, particularly for women and girls.

"Female disabled athletes are less common than male," Sawford says, "and I'm interested in getting [the Adaptive Foot] out there for that reason. There is benefit for women, in particular, with disabilities to having better access to climbing."

"This is going to make climbing quite accessible for people whom it would not have been before, or at least for whom it would have been a lot more difficult," she says, commending Evolv for investing "a lot of effort and time into something that won't bring financial gain."

DeMartino says, "I don't know many companies in this day and age who are willing to do something to just help people."

Based on his experience in coaching, competing and professional adaptive climbing, DeMartino feels that the climbing community as a whole supports adaptive climbers.

"Getting into climbing is easier than ever now for lower-limb amputees," he says. "I teach adaptive clinics to people who have gone through trauma and want to climb, and the interest I see is really growing ... Folks from all backgrounds are finding climbing to be a great way to get back to an active lifestyle or start a life of activity and inclusivity. I think that's something that climbing does as well: it welcomes all."