Some said he climbed like a machine, but no machine could be that graceful. Some said he was in another league, but Patrick Edlinger hadn’t climbed yet. Some said he had stepped out of bounds, but no one cared at the time. Even if Didier Rabotou was disqualified, no one could take away his inspiration that day.

Although bouldering and top-rope contests have become commonplace in the United States, the International Sport Climbing Championship at Snowbird on June 11-12 was this country’s first on-the-fade difficulty competition. Accordingly, most spectators didn’t know what to expect, but it appeared that climber and non-climber alike were bowled over by the power of the event.

Many Americans have been skeptical about such competitions from the start. Common concerns have been that they are contrary to the spirit of "real" climbing, and that the attendant commercialism would result in outside interests guiding the evolution of the sport. Some also argue that putting climbing in the limelight might result in government regulation. Regardless, it seems competitions are here to stay.

The idea of climbing competitions was not immediately accepted in Europe, either. Many top French climbers were originally deadset against them, including Jean-Claude Dryer, the father of difficult free climbing in France. A primary concern was that energy would be drained from actual rock climbing, resulting in a series of testpieces but a decrease in the establishment of new ones.

The British have also strongly resisted formal competitions, although many of Britain’s top rock climbers have participated in them. Most of the criticism comes from traditional factions, in particular the British Mountaineering Council. And Wolfgang Gullich of West Germany, one of the world’s best climbers, still has no interest in competitions.

Ironically, most of the French who expressed concern at the outset have participated extensively in competitions, and others have become involved in their organization. What’s more impressive, the opposite of their feared scenario seems to be the case. Since 1981, the flash level in France has risen from 7c to 8a+, and the difficulty level from 7a to 8c. Instead of draining energy from rock climbing, it appears that competitions are inspirational. The climbers raising standards on the rock are also the climbers placing high in competitions.

Now that such events are receiving sponsorship from outside industry, competition climbing is fast becoming a popular spectator sport in Europe, with audiences of up to 12,000 at a single event. The recently formed World Cup circuit features contests in the United States, Italy, France, Spain, Bulgaria, and Russia, and competition climbing will likely be included as a demonstration event in the next Winter Olympics in Albertville, France.

In late 1986, after competing in several events, West German Stefan Glowacz penned a telling prophesy: “Currently, the sport is still in its infancy, but perhaps it won’t be long before we’re watching Ron Kauk and Patrick Edlinger compete for the World Master title during the first American World Championships.” (Climbing no. 99)

It wasn’t long. A year and a half later, Kauk and Edlinger went head to head in America at the International Sport Climbing Championship (ISCC). Organized by Jeff Lowe in conjunction with Snowbird Resort, the ISCC was the first USA-sanctioned competition in the 1980 World Cup circuit. Just as in World Cup Skiing, competitors will accumulate performance points throughout the season to determine a competition climbing champion for the year. Snowbird owner Dick Bass of “Seven Summits” fame supported the event both spiritually and financially, and Denali Productions filmed the contest for CBS Sports.

The ISCC was an invitational event, drawing an international cast of superstars. But two of the world’s best rock climbers, the lanky Glowacz and Brit Jerry Moffatt on a recent comeback tour, were conspicuously absent; it appears that both are opposed to competing on artificial surfaces, bring up an important question.

Will competitions of the future be held on natural rock? Many European competitions have been, with horrifying environmental consequences. Cutting down trees to make room for spectators, and defacing the rock by chipping and gluing on holds would not be tolerated in the United States.

However, the two most recent major competitions in France, Bercy ’88 and the World Indoor Rock Climbing Premier at Grenoble, were held indoors. Not only does the indoor format spare the environment, it allows easier spectator access, a fairer competition, and perfect conditions.

The trend toward artificial walls is becoming well established. The Rock Master competition in Arco has been the largest European event held on rock, requiring the defacement of new cliffs and their environs yearly, but a recent press release announcing this year’s event gives surprising news: “In order to avoid the destruction of such a splendid patrimonial of nature and vegetation...the organizing committee has decided that Rock Master ’88 will take place on an artificial wall.” It also looks as though all of the World Cup events will be held on artificial walls.

Although not indoors, the Snowbird event took place on an artificial structure. Three separate walls were permanently attached to the appropriately named Cliff Lodge. Two vertical...
At Sam Wednesday, the area at the base of the wall looked deserted, but around the corner was a hubbub of activity. Film crews were scurrying about, finalizing camera positions. Event handysman Paul Sibley was busy finishing the competitors' warmup wall, amid a dozen other projects. Local papers were on the run in the same general area. The corner was directing a team of volunteers, with no end in sight for their outfitting. But the Filmmakers were out of their curiosity, a few cracks, much to the disappointment of cranky director Steve Yeager. Because, as he joked, "I'm an American competitor," he said. "To test a well-rounded climber, a crack should be part of the course."

The sequence around the fourth bolt proved to be a real stumper, foiling all suitors until the eighth climber walked right past it. A photographer puttered uselessly, "What?" It turned out to be Canadian Dave Lanman, who, after a series of false starts, finally hised several controlled dynos, catching with graceful ease. Tiring in a very pleasant setting above, the second-to-last bolt, he made a desperate slap before taking the fall, which was met by immediate and enthusiastic cheering.

According to Lowen, the point of taking up Lanman's high point checked in at 5.12 or c at Lanman's previous most difficult route in the 5.11 category, indicating the inspirational power competition had on approval. According to a wet sport's appetites, giving them just a taste of what was to come. On the same day, Mike Beck was beginning to butter in even the most experienced stomachs. As he was mentioning the medium if the event was epitomized in a spectacle created by Bob Carmichael of Denali Productions. He styled "Spider" Dan Goodwin taking 48-footers from above the roof on the semi-final route, perhaps to spice his future film of the event. They were fairly exciting, but none matched Ron Kauk's fall in the semi-finals.

Saturday dawned a beautiful mountain day, and although the competition didn't begin until late morning, there was plenty of action. A new aura of excitement pervaded the air. Photographers were setting up along the balconies that overlooked the wall, wielding cameras and large dropping the required helmets. Banners were strung, and as the film crew tested an automated raising and lowering system for the head camera, the film crew was closely guarded, and competition guarded by several assistants was on the air. Spectators amidled in, bringing lawn chairs, cameras, and plenty of enthusiasm. The bulk of the crowd was farmers or at least associated with the industry in some way; however, the event had been well-publicized in Salt Lake City and a fair number of curious "fans" persons paid the $10 entry fee as well.

By the time the first of the nine competitors was led to the route's base, around 300 anxious spectators were poised for the unannounced. Being the first to climb is probably as nerve wracking as being the last. Geoff Weigand, from Australia, had no choice; the order of competitors was determined by the luck of the draw. He climbed deliberately past two difficult-looking sections, the first a hump on the bottom. He moved over a bulge above the second bolt and the second a reachy awkward move around the fourth bolt. He clipped an extra bolt on the fifth bolt. When he was on the first bolt. After clipping the fifth bolt on the second, he was off. At this point, the crowd hung, he hesitated, but still pulled through the undermining which would be problematic for more competitive climbers. Tiring and running out of time, he made a couple of quick moves to the middle of the overhang, then swung off to the novice crowd's roar of approval.

The next competitor, Corine La Brune from France, with her short, bleached-blond hair, sandy dreads, and flashy white print Lycra, climbed steadily upwards, combining grace and power to crack through the first two cruxes. The crowd cheered after each as she shook hands. She took a break. Everyone's eyes grew large as she pulled up to the underside of the roof, that her face stretched at the wall and she was off. La Brune had nearly matched Weigand's high point, but competing on the same route as the women could cause a frustrating day for the women. Defeated by long reaches, they would become disheartened, never matching it above La Brune's high point. They shared a common sentiment: on rock,
there's generally more to work with, such as tiny incipient edges that men don't use. Nevertheless, the audience understood the relative difficulties, and encouraged them through the last cruxes. "I felt bad for the women," especially on the final route, "but I could still see them." Watts commented. "But we had little time to design routes in the first place, and the whole wall was conducive to making equitable routes for both men and women.

Up next was American hopeful Jim Karn, a resident of Boulder. Climbing very solidly over his first pitch, he stepped left around the shallow arete instead of staying in the corner as Weigand and LaRonne had. Suddenly, he blurted, "The hold is moving!" He moved up quickly, obviously rattled, and carried on to the fifth bolt before falling.

According to Karn, he didn't fall because of the broken hold, but did affect his performance. The judges were confronted with their first decision, an easy one compared to what they would face later. But their immediate task was to sort through piles of fiberglass holds to find a match for the broken one.

Another top-American climber, Dave Goddard, also from Boulder, tied into the rope next. Goddard is one of the Americans to have climbed in France, but this was his first major competition. He climbed smoothly, managing the first two cruxes without a pump. Just below the overhang, he was working the holds, and a small mistake, a slip, abruptly ending his hopes for the finals. "You only get one chance," says Goddard. The strong point of the smaller-scale bouldering/toprope events taking place in the U.S. where ten or so problems are allowed, is that less emphasis is placed on a single performance.

One of the crème de la crème of France, Jean-Baptiste Tribout, up soon. He was expected to do very well; he had just come from Smith Rock, where he accomplished an impressive Bury of difficult climbing. During his tenuous, he flashed three 5.13s, one of which may be the hardest flash ever, a 5.13c. To top it off he established his own route, "14 at Smith.

Tribout climbed with little hesitation, easily disposing of the moves up to the roof. When he clipped the bolt in the overhead, the pump/blanket was replaced by anxious encouragement, escalating to wild screaming as he wailed over and matched, then pulled the jug over the lip. Mantling up, he made a huge stretch with his left arm, but came up short and lowered back onto the jug to the groans of the crowd. When he pulled in again, the audience roared him on, and again he came up short. It appeared he could hang there for a while. Finally, on his fourth try, he ingnched his fingers onto the edge and got established above the lip, amidst fanatical cheers. Eyeing the steep slab above, he shook out and chalked. The experienced Europeans had pressed their dissatisfaction with the finishing slab before the contest even began. David Chamberlain of France, summed it up: "To make difficult moves on the slab is only designed to create sensational falls for the TV camera, and not a good sport climbing route."

Sure enough, Tribout slipped off the insecure-looking slab, and ended up below the roof, raising hands in an expletive gesture.

The next American to climb was well-known Christian Griffith from Boulder. Looking very strong, he floated up to the roof and pulled over more easily than Tribout had. The crowd wanted a flash, but the technical slab troubled Griffith, who had to hurry since he was approaching the one-minute limit. He too took the souring fall.

Finishing off a two-month trip in France, Pardal at Snowbird was Britain's congenial Martin Atkinson (aka Bashe), a professional climber for five years and veteran of many competitions. During his American tour, he had succeeded on a dozen 5.13s, and finally had flashed the last two 5.12s of the year on. Having an off day, he turned in a sketchy performance but it was more than enough to slip him into the finals. His next big name was Catherine Destivelle from France. Contrary to the media's portrayal of her ongoing rivalry with Lynn Hill, she said they're friends. The media can make it sound otherwise. "Like most other climbers," she said, "I enjoy climbing with her. Destivelle preens on the rock, and recently redpointed the Euroclassic Classic Buyout (5.15). Giving her the hardest female ascent to date. Destivelle didn't appear to her, enjoying herself in Saturday's semifinal. She climbed tentatively, and came off below fellow countrywoman LaRonne's high point. In the standings at the end of the day, Destivelle was out of the finals, but that would change.

Isabelle Patais and Lynn Hill were the last stars for the women, but a couple of dark horses would come out of the woodwork to give them a run for the money.

American hopeful Ron Kauk during his impressive semi-final performance. However, he fell low on the finals route.

Patisier, a full-time climber from France, says the key to her training is changing the rock she climbs or a weekly basis. Looking very nimble, she tippeted through the first two cruxes, making it to the fourth bolt before falling off.

The first surprise among the women was Jennifer Cole from Alabama. She gave a stunning performance, climbing past Patisier's high point to lock up a position in the finals. As she clipped the fifth bolt, many spectators exchanged confused glances, wondering who this unknown climber was, wondering who this unknown climber was.

Reputed as possibly the best women rock climber in the world, Lynn Hill from New Palz, New York received a resounding round of applause when she was introduced. Hill has won all but one of the competitions she has entered, but this was her first in front of an American audience. The ready moves tested her mettle, often requiring full extensions of her 5'11" frame. Moving nervously she still pulled off the first two cruxes, and clipped the fifth bolt before dropping off.

Another impressive performance came from Southern Californian Mar Gingery, widely known for her bouldering prowess. She climbed steadily to just past the fourth bolt, but below her left hand had drifted over the red line delineating the boundary of the climb. This was one of the difficult problems the judges would address in a long meeting that night.

Among the cast of renowned climbers, Marc LeMœnster showed why he is among the top rock climbers in France. He was one of the first to climb an 8b+, although in previous competitions he has underperformed relative to his accomplishments on the rock.

But in Snowbird, LeMœnster climbed as though he had been shot from a cannon. establishing himself over the lip of the overhang with time to spare. The audience was awed. Next, he walked over the slab moves, and the crowd screamed and clapped their appreciation. After clipping the top anchors for the day's first flash, he turned to the tied-up crowd with a big smile and a raised fist.

Then came more inspiration. Many spectators fell that Didier Rabouton's unhastening display was the day's best. Maybe it was the roof. Rabouton is renowned for his smoothness, and has been a consistent performer competing for the last three years.

Colorado is a machine, he made each move without doubt, and though relatively short even by French standards, his final flash was smooth on the roof first try. Although he scratched an inch on the roof, he fell. But below the roof, he had made seven pitches, including the red line as Gingery had, deleting the judges what would prove to be another tough hand.

It made no difference to the ecstatic audience. Shaking his head in disbelief, a non-climber of 60 exclaimed to his wife, "I've never seen an athletic performance like that before — that was sheer ballet."

The most surprising performance of the day was turned in by 17-year-old Jason Stern, who has been climbing for a mere two years. In school plays, he said the audience made him nervous, draining his energies. But at Snowbird, he reflected, "I was able to harness the crowd's energy and use it to my advantage."

His composition stood out. Climbing completely off the 8b, he stepped up with his foot in the slipping process of switching his feet, but, unlike Goddard and Karn, he eked out one more crucial move which would secure him a slot in the final.

Stern was followed by perhaps the most famous rock climber in the world, John Eifling. What does what Pete Rose is to Americans, Eifling has been absent from recent competitions; he is well-enough established that he doesn't have to compete for sponsorship. "I prefer the rock 106 percent," he said. "The rock teaches you how to live."

In a competition, you must try to read the slab, respond to your body's response, rather than the millions of erosion patterns that have been exposed by the rock over the eons. To the rock enthusiast, the rock is the only companion. In Eifling's case, the rock is nature and self. In a competition, you must try to read the slab, respond to your body's response, rather than the millions of erosion patterns that have been exposed by the rock over the eons. To the rock enthusiast, the rock is the only companion. It makes no difference to the ecstatic audience.

Eifling met the semi-final challenge, becoming the third and final climber to flash the 5.12d route. He clipped up to his third flash, but the final flash would show his real makeup.

Scott Franklin, the American who had climbed the most top-end routes than anyone, also put on a fine performance.

Photo: Chris Strom

CLIMBING A U G U S T 1 9 8 8
ance. Franklin recently became the first American to establish a 5.14 with his ascent of Scarface at Smith Rock. He has also repeated Tribout’s To Bolt or Not to Be (5.14a/b), and has soloved and flashed 5.13a.

In the semi-final, he powered his way up, then through the overhang, and onto the devious slab. “Go Scott Franklin!” squealed an accomplished five-year-old to whom Scott had given a chalk bag the day before. But Franklin was soon off and swinging below the roof.

Ron Kauk, notorious Yosemite Valley climber, produced the last exciting performance. Although he’s climbed steadily through the years, his name hasn’t recently been associated with the big numbers many of the other contestants have. Despite never having been in a major competition, he is no novice. A renowned boulderer, Kauk has participated in many U.S. contests, which has provided him an appropriate background for climbing on demand.

Moving as confidently as any of the previous competitors, he surmounted the roof, bringing the crowd to its feet. Kauk was the last chance for an American flash of the route. But he too was tripped up by the confounding slab and fell — and fell. Finally, after some 50 feet the rope jerked tight with his feet just above the second bolt. Seemingly unfazed, he flashed a thumbs up, reviving the tired crowd.

From a spectator’s standpoint, the day had been a huge success, and the high energy carried into Climbing Magazine’s “Off-the-Wall” party. Sponsored by Bud Light (although Spuds was nowhere to be seen), the party included piles of door prizes, munchies, and, naturally, lots of Bud Light.

But inside the Cliff Lodge, a group of seven people wasn’t having such a light-hearted time. Judges Watts, Cannon, Troussier, Carrigan, and Droyer, meet-organizer Lowe, and AIC president and UIAA observer Jim McCarthy were addressing the out-of-bounds infractions of Raboutu and Gingery. Raboutu and Gingery’s performances ranked with the day’s best, but both had touched out-of-bounds, albeit unconsciously. The route designers thought no one would end up as far left as the two had reached, so the route’s red boundary was somewhat contrived. According to Watts and Cannon, the route would have been no harder had there been no boundary there.

Nonetheless, the rules had to be upheld. Although it might appear that the case should have been cut and dry, it wasn’t. The problem lay in interpreting the rules, which seem to have been nebulous from the outset.

The ISCC had obtained UIAA sanc-

WORN TO BE WILD.

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A View from the Gallery
by Yvon Chouinard

The wall supposedly cost $150,000, and then all the contestants have to be put up and fed. A crowd of 5000 was expected, but I only saw 1500, and all the souls so far have to be losing a lot of money on this gig.

One problem I can see here is that the wall itself is deadly boring. Where Bercy had interesting features like mantles, laybacks, corners, and even a magnificent roof with a jack-crack, the Snowbird wall is mostly flat concrete with wart-like hand holds. You still have to work out sequences, but the route is very obvious. In Bercy you could get off route and there was always a choice of doing a layback or face climbing or whatever.

This has to be a stretch for the most basic nothing in the can.

Then along comes Pat Edlinger, the androgynous Michael Jackson of climbing. He slowly puts on his shoes, never once glancing up at the wall. When he starts up he moves smoothly and quickly. All the women are going and everyone is in disbelief at how beautifully he climbs.

Because he shows it, he's up at the overhang. A ray of sun hits the flippin just as his white hand reaches over. Le Blond swings over the roof, stands in jam and both hands simultaneously into his chalk bag. The crowd goes nuts. Nobody cares if he is in American, French, or Serbo-Croatian. This is the moment we have been treated to great art.
Sunday morning broke cloudy and cool, forcing spectators to dig out their sweaters and long pants. Word of Saturday’s fun must have traveled fast, because the finals crowd swelled to over 1000.

The top ten men and top six women from the semi-finals were advanced to the finals. First out of the gate was Mark LeMénestrel, who came on like a race horse. He was over the first bulge quickly, and after a short shake out on the small slab above, attacked the vertical section leading to the roof. Like the rest of the French climbers, he wasn’t tall, but he fired precise dynos through the reachy section, giving the crowd a quick shot of adrenaline. But just below the roof he got scrunched up, lost his balance, and tipped over.

Alexander Duboc, a French climber who placed fourth in Grenoble and third in Bercy, climbed mindbogglingly over the bulge but blew a dyno low on the vertical section, uttering a healthy “Merd!” while airborne. Of course, it was immediately obvious that the final route was reachable for the men — the women would have an even more difficult time. Jennifer Cole fell at the bulge, and the not-so-tall Scott Franklin was thwarted by a dynamic reach midway up the vertical section.

Dark horse Mari Gingery came out looking solid, cranking over the bulge and onto the vertical wall. She was smooth making the hard moves past the fourth bolt. Photographers hanging just a few feet away were astonished when she crimped a razor-sized edge formed between abutting panels, and held it to make a crucial move. Then, there was a tense moment when she pulled up slack to clip the fifth bolt. Hanging tenuously from a two-finger pocket, it appeared she might smash into the slab below if she missed the clip. She didn’t, but the strenuous section had zapped her strength, and she soon fell.

French hopeful Jean-Baptiste Tribout looked incredibly strong. At the same point where LeMénestrel had lost his balance, Tribout reached and patted high, a technique employed by experienced competitors to mark maximum height should they fall doing the next moves. But Cannon, hanging just above, perched Tribout’s slab as bad strategy, saying it looked as though it blew his concentration, because for just a second he thought about falling. Tribout then hooked his right toe on his right handhold, and the crowd cheered him to hold it. But he too fell peeled.

Once again Saturday’s surprise performer, Jason Stern, came out relaxed, but he fell below LeMénestrel and Tribout’s high points. Martin Atkinson then put in a redeeming performance. The testy spot at the seventh bolt split him off when he caught a finger in a carabiner while lunging, but he had barely topped Stern’s high point.

Saturday’s top woman climber, Corinne LaBrune had a difficult time with the bulge down low and blew out at the fourth bolt. Lynn Hill followed, and had little problem climbing around the bulge. However, after hitting several dynamic moves, she ran into trouble where Gingery had, falling upside down just after touching the two-finger pocket next to the fifth bolt.

Christian Griffeth looked as solid as he did on Saturday, and the crowd was behind him all the way to his high point just centimeters below Stern’s. Then, everyone’s hopes for Ron Kneck were dashed when he fell at the bulge, slipping off in an apparent mental lapse. Patsier and Weinhard each got relatively low on the route.

The judges were worried. Had they created a bogus route, one that was too difficult? Ideally, at least one competitor would flash it, but no one had even made it to the roof. Soon, there were only two competitors left: Patrick Edlinger and Catherine Destivelle.

A couple of years ago, young French climbers considered Edlinger washed up. He hadn’t hung out at the “in” crags with the likes of Tribout, Antoine and Marc LeMénestrel, and Rabot. He seemed to have dropped out, probably not showing up at Buoux and Verdon, they thought, because he didn’t want to embarrass himself. But the young French climbers were very wrong.

Showing up at the base of the route, he was collected, seemingly oblivious to the pressure. He must have been relaxed just before coming out to climb, as he had almost fallen asleep, wrapped in blankets to keep warm.

Edlinger quietly danced past the bulge, stopping momentarily on the slab for a look at the vertical wall above. When he statically reached the hold that everyone else had lunged to, the incredulous crowd sensed that they were in for a show. Edlinger’s high steps through the next couple of moves had jaws dropping in astonishment at his double-jointed flexibility. At the point where Tribout and LeMénestrel had fallen, the .53 crux, he barely hesitated, locking off and stuffing a dig beneath the finger pocket. No one else had touched. Rediam broke loose below as he pulled up under the roof.

There, he saw no chalk on the holds. He worked into the roof, and cooly extended from a sidepull to a hold over the lip. Just then, the sun popped out, throwing a golden light over Edlinger. No one could have written a better script. The crowd went berserk.

Those watching from below near the base of the wall stormed out to where they could see the slab. Edlinger powered over to a no-hands rest so casually that many thought he might light up a Gauloise. Instead, he looked over to judge Cannon and commented, “I think no one has been here.” Of course he had won, but his performance wasn’t over. He started up the dicey looking slab. The crowd howled when he screwed his right-hand pinky into a hole, then pulled through to a tenuous stance. The next bit was mind bending — he placed his left foot at shoulder height, and cranked onto it, to everyone’s bemusement. In seconds he had clipped the top anchor, to a background of a crowd gone wild.

After Edlinger’s feat, Catherine Destivelle’s performance could be nothing but anticlimactic. It was an important one, though — Hill and Gingery were tied for first. They were watching from beside the judges box ten feet away from the wall.

All was very quiet as Destivelle nervously started up, a tense excitement filling the air. Tenuous clipping accompanied Destivelle’s success over the bulge; the partial crowd wanted an American winner. It was gripping to watch her climb the steep face above the tiny slab. With hands on sidepails at waist height and feet spread wide, Destivelle uncoiled, hitting her target and fighting hard to hold it. Sweaty palmed, the crowd cheered the powerful display. Established on the edge, she set up again, and quickly it was a three-way tie. But Destivelle didn’t know that. If she had, she wouldn’t have dallied there, on
the two-finger pocket next to the bolt, scratching with her feet and getting pumped. But hopes for an American winner were soon dashed as Destivelle tenaciously struggled a few feet higher to take first.

Basking in the afterglow of the rousing finale, spectators milled about, mostly raving about Edlinger's stirring display while things were organized for the speed climbing demonstration. There was no pressure, though, and it was a great way to smooth out the competitive edge. The commentator's microphone was left open, allowing competitors and spectators alike to hoot and holler as the climbers jumped and limbered from hold to hold. "It was just climbers out climbing," said one competitor.

Edlinger (above) pulling over the roof on Sunday to the roar of the crowd. Catherine Destivelle (right) set to surgeon in the finals, just below the point where Hill and Gingery had fallen. Jacky Godoffe (below) enjoying himself at the speed climbing demonstration, which he won hands-down.

After the contest, Edlinger said that sharing the company of his early inspirations, Henry Barber and Ron Kauk, and being belayed on the final route by his friend Paul Stibley, meant more to him than winning the competition.

Edlinger plans to return to the U.S. this fall to do some climbing, but a big goal is to visit the native people of this country—the Indians. He respects the way they live in harmony with nature, the way they appreciate life day-to-day.

And since climbing takes place in nature, he feels it is a school of life, one that can teach you how to be humble, one that can leave you with a smile on your face at the end of the day, whether you climb 5.8 or 5.14.

Cowboys, like climbers, are very particular about the ropes they use.

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