

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 Raboutou was disqualified, no one could take away his inspiration that day.

Off The Rocks

by Michael Benge

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-lead 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 Droyer, the father of difficult free climbing in France. A primary concern was that energy would be drained from actual rock climbing, resulting in repeats 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 1985, the flash level in France has risen from 7c to 8a+, and the difficulty level from 8a+ 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 prophecy: "Currently, the sport is still in its infant stage, 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 UIAA-sanctioned competition in the 1988 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,

Scott Franklin climbing on the semi-final route; he and two other Americans would make it over the roof at 2/3's height.

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, bringing 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 patrimony 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



Photo: Michael Kennedy



Photo: Greg Epperson

Dan Michael (right) composing himself during his fine performance in the open qualifying round, in which he was the top finisher. One of the large French contingent, Jean-Baptiste Tribout (below) surveys his next move in the finals. The French came out on top but the Americans proved they're not far behind.

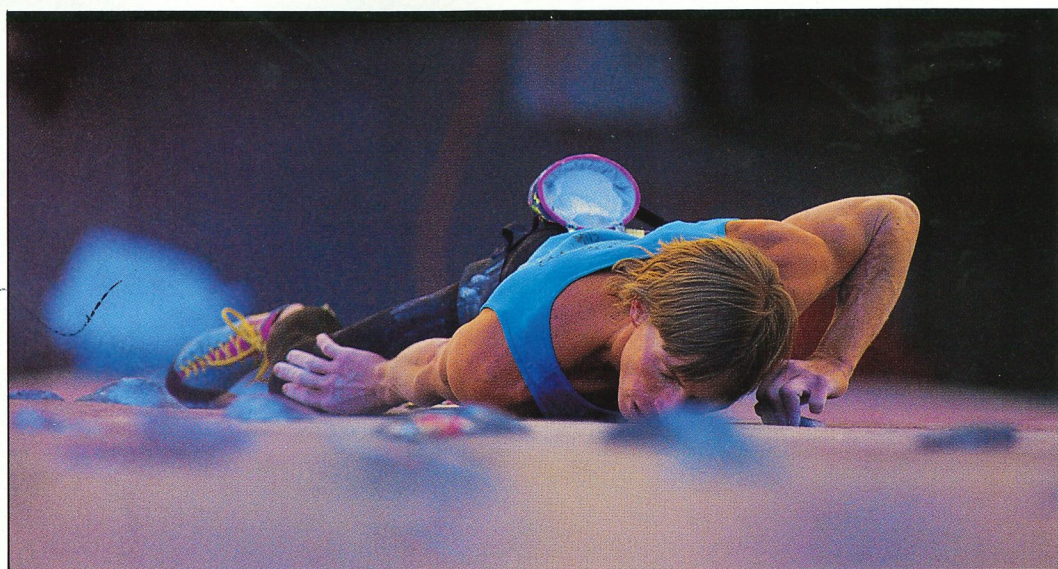


Photo: Greg Epperson

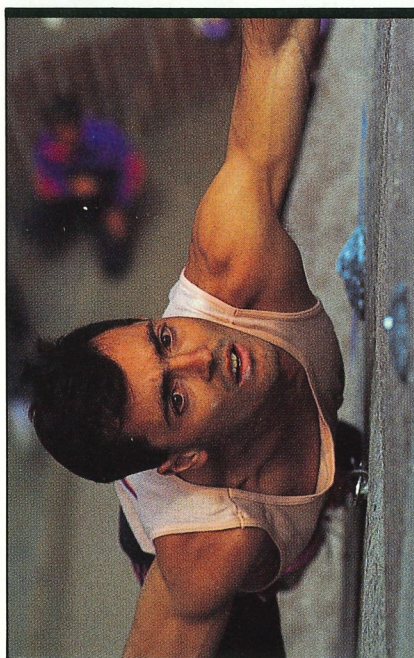


Photo: Michael Kennedy

walls were built on the lodge's north side; one was used for the open qualifying rounds on Wednesday and Thursday, and the speed climbing demonstration that followed Sunday's difficulty finals, and the other was designed to accommodate a tie-breaking superfinal. A more interesting wall was constructed on the lodge's 20-foot-wide west "buttress," and featured shallow aretes, corners, bulges, and a large overhang. Here, route designers/judges Marco Troussier, Neil Cannon, Kim Carrigan, Jean-Claude Droyer, and Alan Watts created the semi-final and final routes side by side.

Their task was made especially difficult considering the problems en-

At 9am 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 handyman Paul Sibley was busy finishing the competitors' warmup wall, amid a dozen other projects. Local avalanche expert Randy Trover was directing a team of volunteers, without which the weekend may not have been so enjoyable. Coordinating operations for Snowbird Resort, Karen Fellerhoff was ticking off items from her long list. And Jeff Lowe was trying to rein in the organizational monster he had created.

countered in constructing the 115-foot-high wall. Hindered by a lack of time, design flaws with the wall, and holds that broke and spun, an inexperienced yet tenacious crew amazingly pulled it off, sometimes working until one in the morning under huge lamps supplied by the local fire department. According to Watts, "It was a disaster. A day before the open, there was a lot of question as to whether it would work."

The wall cost a whopping \$150,000, but according to seasoned European competitors, it was relatively primitive. The wall for Bercy '88 had taken a full year to develop and offered a great variety of climbing options, and its routes had taken several weeks to create. Although the Snowbird wall wasn't state-of-the-art, the quality of the routes would determine whether the contest was a success. The route creators carried a big burden in the few days preceding the contest.

The open round gave uninvited Americans an opportunity to qualify for the semi-finals, hopefully stimulating a protracted interest in competitions among U.S. climbers in general.

On the shady north side, it was cold. The start was moved back to 11:30, giving the frantic workers the extra time they needed. Inside the lodge, a throng of skinny climbers was huddled over the registration table. The atmosphere was amiable, more a gathering of friends than competitors.

The contest format involved strictly on-sight climbing. Hailing from California to New York, the open competitors, most relative unknowns, were isolated in the warmup area, stretching, meditating, taking the whole thing pretty seriously. Of the 28 hopefuls only six — four men and two women — would qualify for Saturday's semi-finals.

Under cool temperatures, Mike Beck, a local from Salt Lake City and

the first of the open contestants, was escorted along the carpeted walkway to the base of the route, where an organizer explained the competition's rules to him. Above, the rope was clipped through the first bolt and alongside the wall, judges Droyer, Watts, and Cannon hung with their measuring sticks blowing in the wind.

After tying in and nodding to his belayer, Beck latched on to the starting jugs. But at the first crux, he hung out too long and dropped. A tentative round of applause ensued — spectators weren't sure of proper etiquette yet, but their curiosity was piqued.

With each competitor the crowd began to "wire" the route, tailoring their applause to the completion of crux sections. Challenging sequences involved underclings, finger pockets, slopers, edges, and sidepulls, but no cracks, much to the disappointment of crack aficionado Steve Petro. "This is an American competition," 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 muttered respectfully, "Who's that?" It turned out to be Canadian Dave Lanman. Continuing his impressive display, he fired several controlled dynos, catching holds with graceful ease. Tiring in a very difficult looking section 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 Lowe, the climbing up to Lanman's high point checked in at 5.12c or d. Lanman's previous most difficult flash had been a 5.12a, indicating the inspirational power competition can instill. Wednesday's action wet spectators' appetites, giving them just a taste of what was to come.

On Thursday morning under clear skies the open round continued. Watchers from the day before were anxious for more vicarious thrills, and they got them. However, the best performances were saved for last, and they weren't by the youth, as many had expected. Local veteran Merrill Bitter started off a string of energizing displays, climbing through the difficult lower cruxes with improbable smoothness. However, he fatigued in the same difficult section as Lanman, falling and flipping upside down in the excitement.

Long-time Boulder climbers Dan Michael and Pat Adams both climbed flawlessly into the same quagmire of

hard-to-use holds and long reaches. According to Watts, this section was designed so that no one would finish the route, but Michael came close. Long reaches off very small holds put him at the last bolt. Tension soared. The crowd urged Michael on for the flash, but he finally tired and fell just short of the top. His determined performance brought the open round to a fitting climax. The qualifiers included Dave Lanman, Merrill Bitter, Dan Michael, and Pat Adams for the men, and Lieija Painkiner and Melissa Quigley for the women.

Although only a precursor of what was to come, the open had been riveting. The air of excitement intensified throughout Friday as the invitees began filtering in. LeMénestrel, Tribout, Hill, Patissier, Franklin, Destivelle, Atkinson, Edlinger — it was refreshing to see them share an open, relaxed attitude, talking, laughing, sunning, and renewing acquaintances.

One reason competitions may become popular with participants is the first-class treatment they receive. Competitors in Snowbird didn't seem to mind lounging around the Cliff Lodge's rooftop pool and huge jacuzzi on Friday afternoon, nor did they complain about the in-room massages they could schedule at their leisure. The deluxe accommodations came complete with "Bird bucks," coupon books that counted as real money in any of the lodge's several restaurants. It was a far cry from life in Camp IV, to be sure.

Most of the Europeans had participated in competitions before, and, although appreciative of this American hospitality, they were quite used to the whole fanfare. But as Friday wore on, it was apparent that butterflies were beginning to flutter in even the most experienced stomachs.

During the afternoon, the media angle of the event was epitomized in a spectacle created by Bob Carmichael of Denali Productions. He filmed "Spider" Dan Goodwin taking 40-foot wingers 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 cannon-like lenses and donning the required helmets. Banners were strung, and the film crew tested an automated raising and lowering system for the head cameraman. Previously relaxed boundaries were closely guarded, and competitors guarded themselves from the pesty media, which included correspondents from *Sports Illustrated*, *Outside*, and *Life*, to mention a few.

Spectators ambled in, bringing lawn chairs, cameras, and plenty of enthusiasm. The bulk of the crowd were climbers 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 "lay" persons paid the \$10 entry fee as well.

By the time the first of the 39 competitors was led to the route's base, around 500 anxious spectators were poised for the unknown.

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 balancy move over a bulge above the second bolt and the second a reachy awkward move around the fourth bolt. After clipping the fifth bolt on the vertical face below the six-foot overhang, he hesitated, but still pulled through the undercling which would be problematic for most competitors. Tiring and running out of time, he made a couple of quick moves to the middle of the overhang, then came swinging off to the novice crowd's roar of approval.

The next competitor, Corrine LaBrune from France, with her short, bleached-blond hair, dangling earrings, and flashy white print Lycra, climbed steadily upwards, combining grace and power to crank through the first two cruxes. The crowd cheered after each as she shook out from good holds. Everyone's eyes grew large as she pulled up to the undercling, but her feet scratched at the wall and she was off.

LaBrune had nearly matched Weigand's high point, but competing on the same route as the men would cause a frustrating day for the women. Defeated by long reaches, they would become disheartened, never making it above LaBrune's high point. They shared a common sentiment: on rock,

there's generally more to work with, such as tiny intermediate edges that men don't use. Nevertheless, the audience understood the relative difficulty, and encouraged them through the lower cruxes. "I felt bad for the women, especially on the finals route," Watts commented. "But we had little time to design routes in the first place, and the wall wasn't 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 the first bulge, he stepped left around the shallow arete instead of staying in the corner as Weigand and LaBrune 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 it 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, Dale Goddard, also from Boulder, tied into the rope next. Goddard is one of two Americans to have climbed 8b (5.13d) 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 foot switch when he slipped, 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, was up soon. He was expected to do very well; he had just come from Smith Rock, where he accomplished an impressive flurry of difficult climbing. During his ten-day stay, he flashed three 5.13's, one of which may be the hardest flash ever, a 5.13c. To top it off he established his second 5.14 at Smith.

Tribout climbed with little hesitation, easily disposing of the moves up to the roof. When he clipped the bolt in the overhang, spirited applause was replaced by anxious encouragement, escalating to wild cheering as he pulled over and matched hands on 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 willed him on, but again he came up short. It appeared he could hang there all day. Finally, on his fourth try, he inched 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 expressed their dissatisfaction with the finishing slab before the contest even began. David Chambre 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 well below the roof, raising both 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 15-minute time limit. He too took the soaring fall.

Finishing off a two-month trip in the States at Snowbird was Britain's congenial Martin Atkinson (aka Basher), a professional climber for five years and veteran of many competitions. During his American tour, he had succeeded on a dozen 5.13's, and had flashed the last four 5.12 + 's he'd been on. Having an off day, he turned in a sketchy performance but it was enough to slip him into the finals.

The next big name was Catherine Destivelle from France. Contrary to the media's portrayal of her ongoing rivalry with Lynn Hill, she says, "We're friends. The media can make it sound otherwise." Like most other competitors, Destivelle prefers going out on the rock, and recently redpointed the Buoux classic *Chouca* (8a+), giving her the hardest female ascent to date.

But Destivelle didn't appear to be enjoying herself in Saturday's semi-final. She climbed tentatively, and came off below fellow countrywoman LaBrune's high point. In the standings at the end of the day, Destivelle was out of the finals, but that would change.

Isabelle Patissier 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.

Patissier, a full-time climber from France, says the key to her training is changing the rock she climbs on a weekly basis. Looking very nimble, she tiptoed 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 Patissier'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.

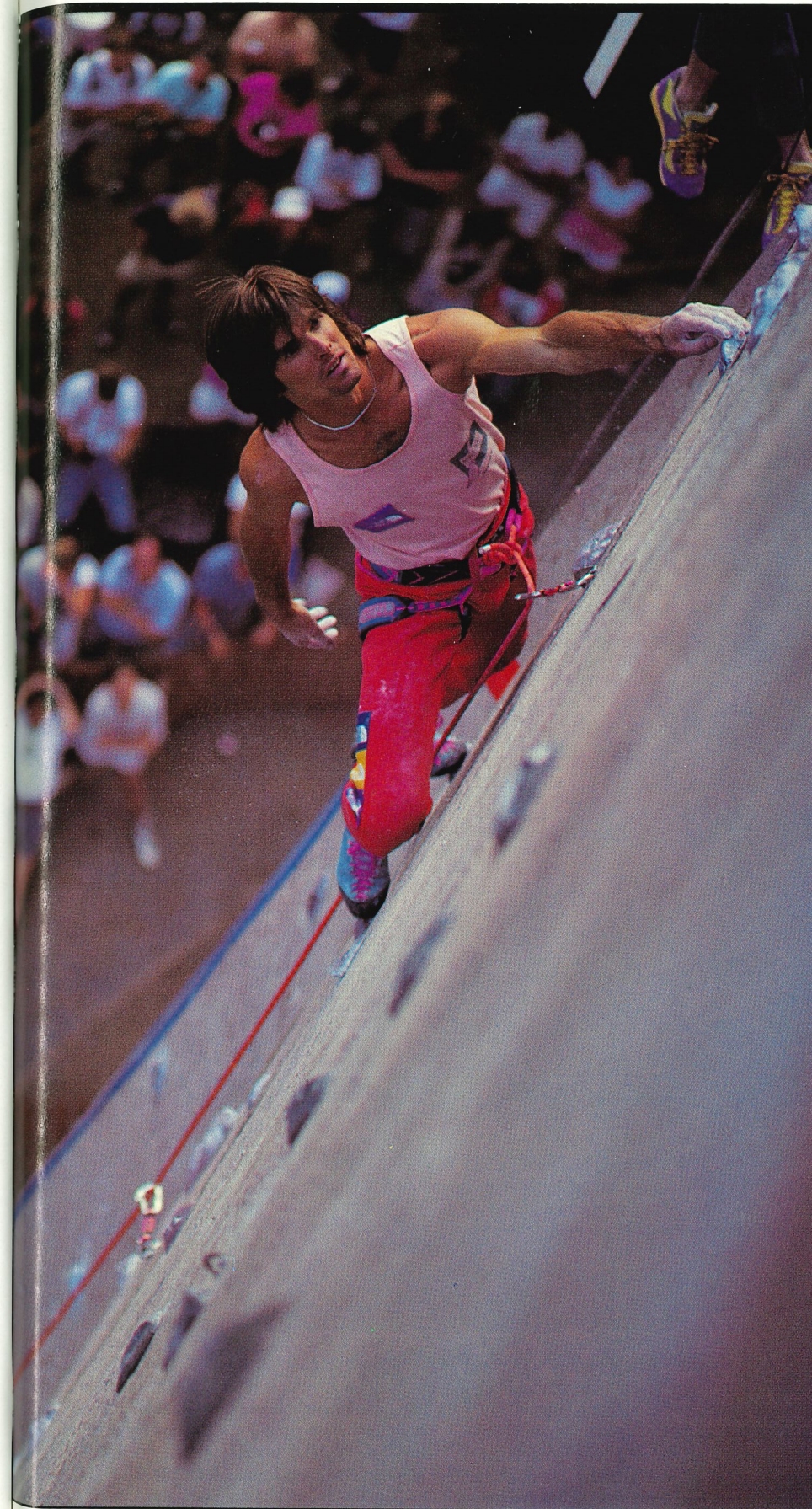
Reputed as possibly the best women rock climber in the world, Lynn Hill from New Paltz, New York received a resounding round of applause when she was introduced. Hill has won all but one of the competitions she has entered, but this was her first in front of an American audience. The reachy moves tested her mettle, often requiring full extensions of her 5'1" 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 Mari Gingery, widely known for her bouldering prowess. She climbed steadfastly 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 LeMénestrel 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, LeMénestrel 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 riled-up crowd with a big smile and a raised fist.

Then came more inspiration. Many spectators felt that Didier Raboutou's



unhesitating display was the day's best. Many in the know expected it. Raboutou is renowned for his smoothness, and has been a consistent performer in competitions since their inception.

Climbing like a machine, he made each move without doubt, and though relatively short even by French standards, he cranked the long reach over the roof first try. Although he scratched just a bit on the slab, he climbed through for the second flash, apparently. But below the roof, he had made an error; he stepped over the red line as Gingery had, dealing 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 composure stood out. Climbing comfortably to the tricky undercling, his foot was slipping in the process of switching his feet, but, unlike Goddard and Karn, he eeked out one more crucial move which would secure him a slot in the finals.

Stern was followed by perhaps the most famous rock climber in the world. Patrick Edlinger is to Europeans what Pete Rose is to Americans. Edlinger has been absent from recent competitions; he is well-enough established that he doesn't have to compete for sponsorship. "I prefer the rock 100 percent," he says. "The rock teaches you to read an element, to become in tune with nature and yourself. In a competition, you must try to read the diabolical minds of the route creators, rather than the millenniums of erosion." He still plans to compete once a year because he thinks competitions embody all of the extreme demands of climbing — power, flexibility, and endurance.

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

Scott Franklin, the American who has climbed more top-end routes than anyone, also put on a fine perform-

Photo: Chris Noble

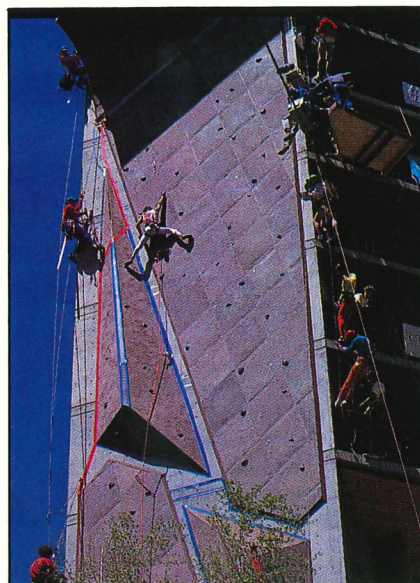


Photo: Michael Bengt

Didier Raboutou (above) just before stepping out-of-bounds in the semi-finals. His otherwise flawless flash dealt a tough hand to judges Alan Watts, Jean-Claude Droyer, Marco Troussier, Kim Carrigan, and Neil Cannon (right). Seventeen-year-old Jason Stern (below) meditating before his surprising showing in the semi-final. He proved that it wasn't a fluke in the finals, finishing as the top American.



Photo: Chris Noble

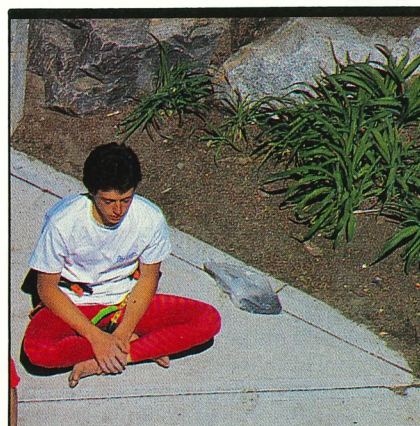


Photo: Greg Epperson

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.

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 soloed and flashed 5.13a.

In the semi-final, he powered his way up to, then through the overhang, and onto the devious slab. "Go Scott Franklin!" squeaked 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

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.

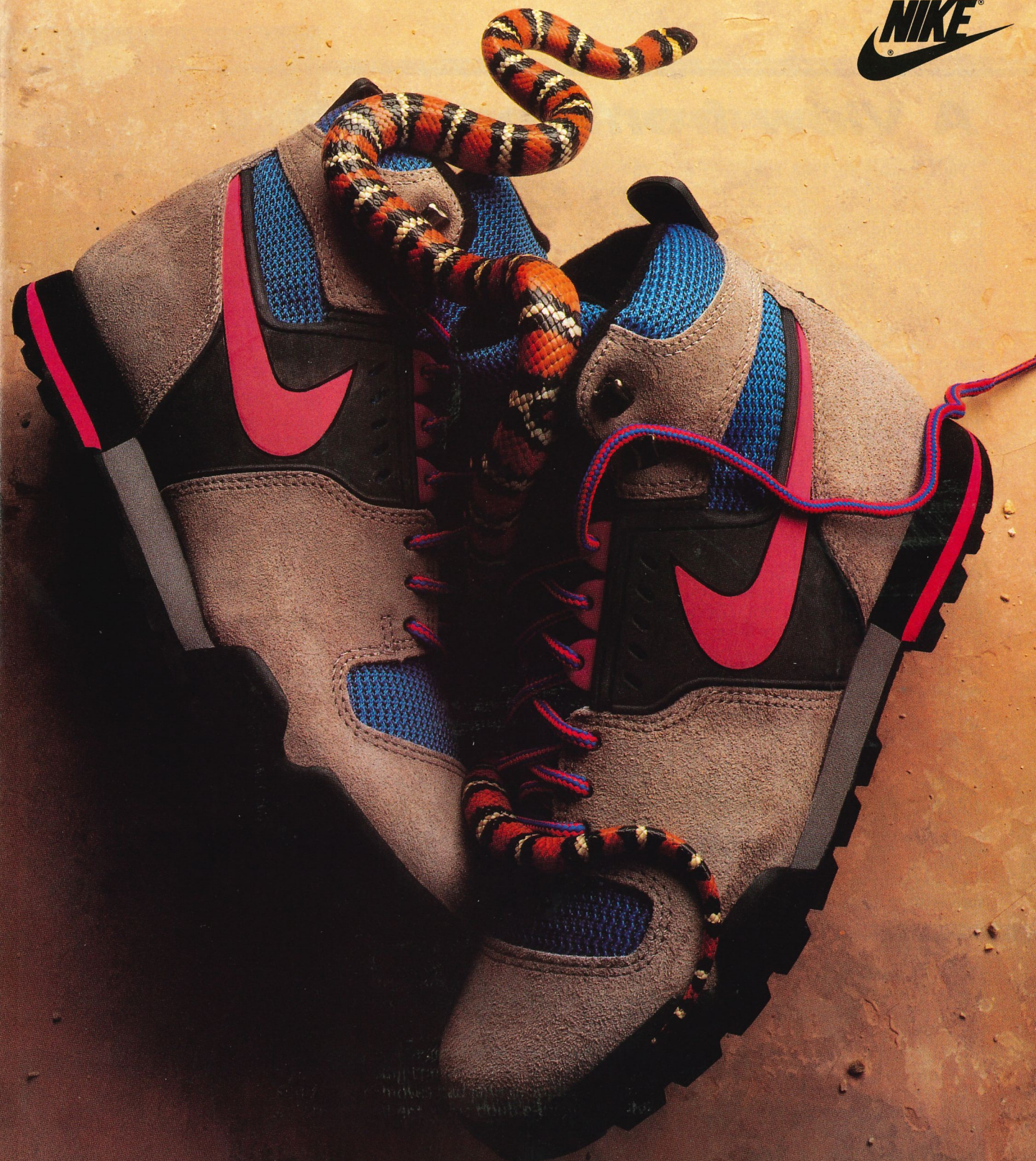
But inside the Cliff Lodge, a group of seven people wasn't having such a lighthearted time. Judges Watts, Cannon, Troussier, Carrigan, and Droyer, meet organizer Lowe, and AAC president and UIAA observer Jim McCarthy were addressing the out-of-bounds infractions of Raboutou and Gingery.

Raboutou 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.

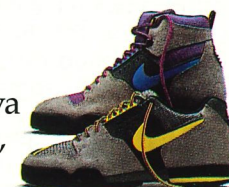
Nonetheless, the rules had to be upheld. Although it might appear that the case should have been cut and dry, it wasn't. The problem lay in interpreting the rules, which seem to have been nebulous from the outset.

The ISCC had obtained UIAA sanc-



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Women's Lava High (above)
Men's Lava High
Son of Lava Dome

A View from the Gallery

Paris, January 30, 1988. Here we are in the giant Bercy "roller ball" sports palace in Paris, watching a bunch of Lycra-clad and muscle-shirted athletes try to climb up a piece of steep cement. Looking over at Jim McCarthy I can tell he is thinking the same thing; sitting around a campfire in Yosemite or at a Vulgarian rave in the Gunks 30 years ago, who would have thought that one day we would pay \$24 each to sit with 10,000 French chain-smokers, and witness a scene like this? I guess when you consider that a coffee and croissant "breakfast" in Paris costs five bucks, and a beer sets you back \$8, then the ticket price is about right. It's just tough for Americans to adjust to living in a Second World country.

Even though this is an invitational meet, hardly any of the competitors can make it all the way up the qualifying climb. Personally, I'm impressed with Didier Raboutou. He looks a level or two above the rest of the men, but the guy to watch is Antoine Le Menétre, who built the wall and is working as a rigger.

This fellow is an absolute Spider-man. During intermission, while everyone is off getting Cokes and *chiens chaud*, I'm absolutely riveted watching him work on the wall. He's got a bucket full of holds and bolts and wrenches, and is all over the wall, hanging from his jugs. He changes a sequence of holds, then in his bare feet and with no chalk, he does the moves to make sure they are *exactly*

7B+, just like the recipe calls for. Flowing over these moves he looks to be a level or two beyond even Raboutou.

The women competitors look like typically healthy women athletes, and the men, by and large, appear pretty normal. You have to look hard to see the small "minor protest" earrings in their left ears. This is no climbing revolution, just athletics in 1988. I find myself looking over at this classic, wizened old lady of about 75 years sitting all by herself. I imagine her having done the Aiguilles with Armand Charlet back when he would stick the pick of his axe in a crack and stand on it, and I wonder what is going through her mind.

Two hours through the show, the smoke from the 8000 or so Gauloise smokers begins to do us in. My wife, who can be rabidly militant about social injustices such as this, begins to use her program to fan the smoke back to the immediate offenders in front of us. The old lady joins the ranks and starts fanning the group in front of her. She gives my wife a wink, and they become soulmates. January 29, 1988, 5:06 pm: the first organized smoking protest in France.

The wall is changed for the finals, and includes some overhangs. The belayers are not anchored, so some of the falls make really good theatre. The British climber, John Dunn, a pretty hefty lad, falls and jerks his belayer ten feet in the air, practically extruding

Isabelle Patissier showing her stuff in the finals. The women and men climbed on the same routes.

him through the first carabiner. The end finally comes around midnight and there's no question that Lynn Hill and Didier Raboutou are the definitive winners. There is no cheating or sandbagging.

I must admit I enjoyed the women's competition a lot more. It's pretty sexy to see a well-honed woman in turquoise Lycra flowing up a difficult climb. If you weren't a climber, I doubt the men's competition would hold your interest for very long. I mean, who bothers to watch the men's figure skating in the Olympics? It's the women who are art.

In any case, I hope these indoor competitions are successful so they can be a harmless outlet for the athletes who really don't care for mountains anyway. Myself, I'll never go back to see one in France until they ban public smoking.

Snowbird, June 12, 1988. This is hardly a view from the gallery. It's more like laying around the dust of old Camp IV. At least no one is smoking except the French competitors. Julie Kennedy sneaks me up into the judges' area so I can see Isabelle Patissier up close. She looks marvelous in peach shorts and tank top with just enough of her ice-blue LeBaby bra straps showing.

"Lowe was opposed, saying they wouldn't be accurate because of varying, inconsistent angles." However, Saturday night the panel decided to review a videotape taken by spectator Laura McCarthy who had happened to film both Raboutou and Gingery from directly below.

Based on review of the McCarthy video, the committee decided that Raboutou had used the out-of-bounds area for support, so by either set of rules should be disqualified where he stepped out, which was not high enough to qualify for the finals.

Similarly, Gingery's high point should also have been the point where she touched out. According to Watts, who was positioned next to her at the

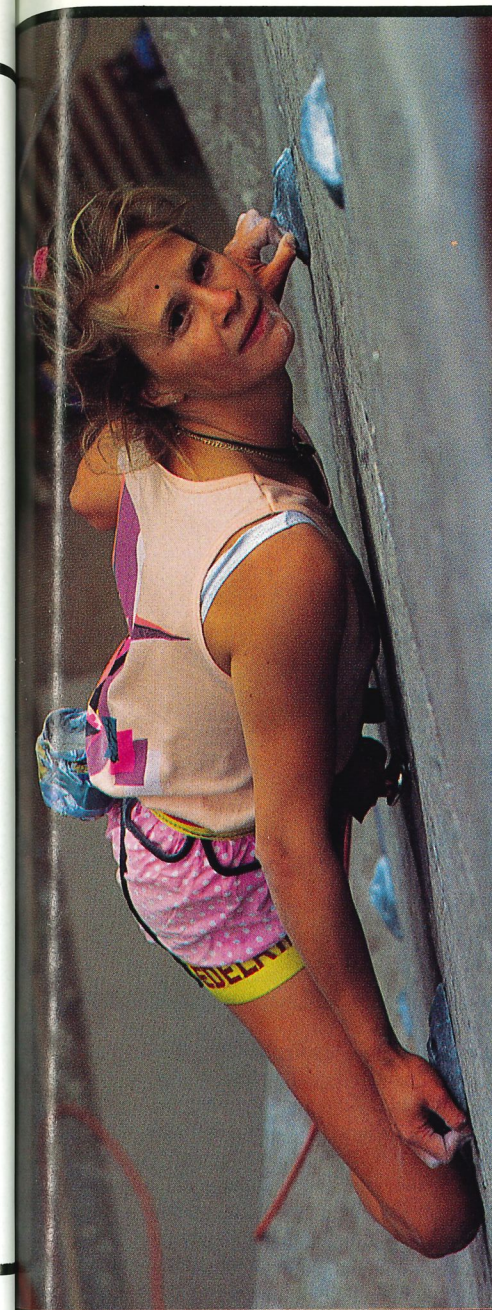


Photo: Beth Wald

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 see about 1000 souls so someone has 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 jam 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.

I'm prepared to see Didier smoke all the men in a quick wham-bam and then I'll settle back in my lawn chair, rub a little SP15 on my bald spot, and watch the women do their stuff. This is not to be, however; I didn't figure on the shitty wall, and I have never seen Edlinger climb. Didier is brilliant as usual but gets knocked out by a technicality when he steps out of bounds, and the women are sandbagged by the long reaches between holds. I can't even see where the winning wart is for Catherine Destiville.

This thing is never going to play in Peoria or Albertsville unless it becomes a lot better theatre. You need suspense, drama, pathos, all the elements of basic theatre that are missing at Snowbird. The characters themselves will need to capitalize on their

own sellable idiosyncrasies. Ron Kauk will have to play up the image of the super casual, lone American hero with his Levis and rugged good looks. Jean-Baptiste Tribout should flip off the crowd more often — maybe even moon them — to build on his "bad boy" image. Remember, tantrums sell sports these days. Some of the women will have to travel with hairdresser in tow.

Well, there's two people left to climb in the finals and no one has even gotten to the base of the overhang. The sun's dropping down, the Mormon girls are starting to think of ice cream, and I'm ready to head for a shower, then a beer with "Hayduke." This has to be a disaster for CBS with nothing in the can.

Then along comes Patrick 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 ga-ga and everyone is in disbelief at how beautifully he climbs.

Before you know it, he's up at the overhang. A ray of sun hits the lip just as his white hand reaches over. Le Blond swings over the roof, stands in balance, and jams both hands simultaneously into his chalk bag. The crowd goes nuts. Nobody cares if he is American, French, or Serbo-Croatian. What matters is that for a brief moment we have been treated to great art.

According to Carrigan and Troussier's measurements before Sunday's final, the point where Gingery touched out was at exactly the same height as Destiville's high point. Carrigan and Troussier then decided that Destiville was eligible for the finals. In letting Destiville into the final on Sunday morning, ISCC Rules 16 and 17 appear to have been disregarded. They state that the temporary standing given after the contest will be official if no written dispute is given to the judges within a half hour, and that, in the case of dispute, the judges will make their final decision within two hours of the end of each day's contest.

In a meeting with some of the competitors Sunday morning, Lowe also cleared the changing of Rule 14, which

says that the winner will be determined by "taking the sum of the meters covered during the two rounds." Under the rule change, the winner would be the competitor who climbed highest in the final round only.

Although the actions of the judges have been sharply criticized, it seems they came out of a desire to make fair decisions, and not in an effort to manipulate the competition for political reasons. The ultimate verdicts appear to have been unanimously supported by all of the judges. However, problems such as these point to a clear need to consider the competitors' rights by coming up with a judicious and unambiguous set of rules beforehand.

tioning at the last minute, which made it the first competition in the 1988 World Cup circuit. Accordingly, UIAA rules should have been adhered to, but the "Official Rules" printed in the ISCC program were different.

No meeting was held prior to the event to discuss which rules would apply — either between the judges or with the competitors — leaving two sets of rules floating around. There was bound to be confusion.

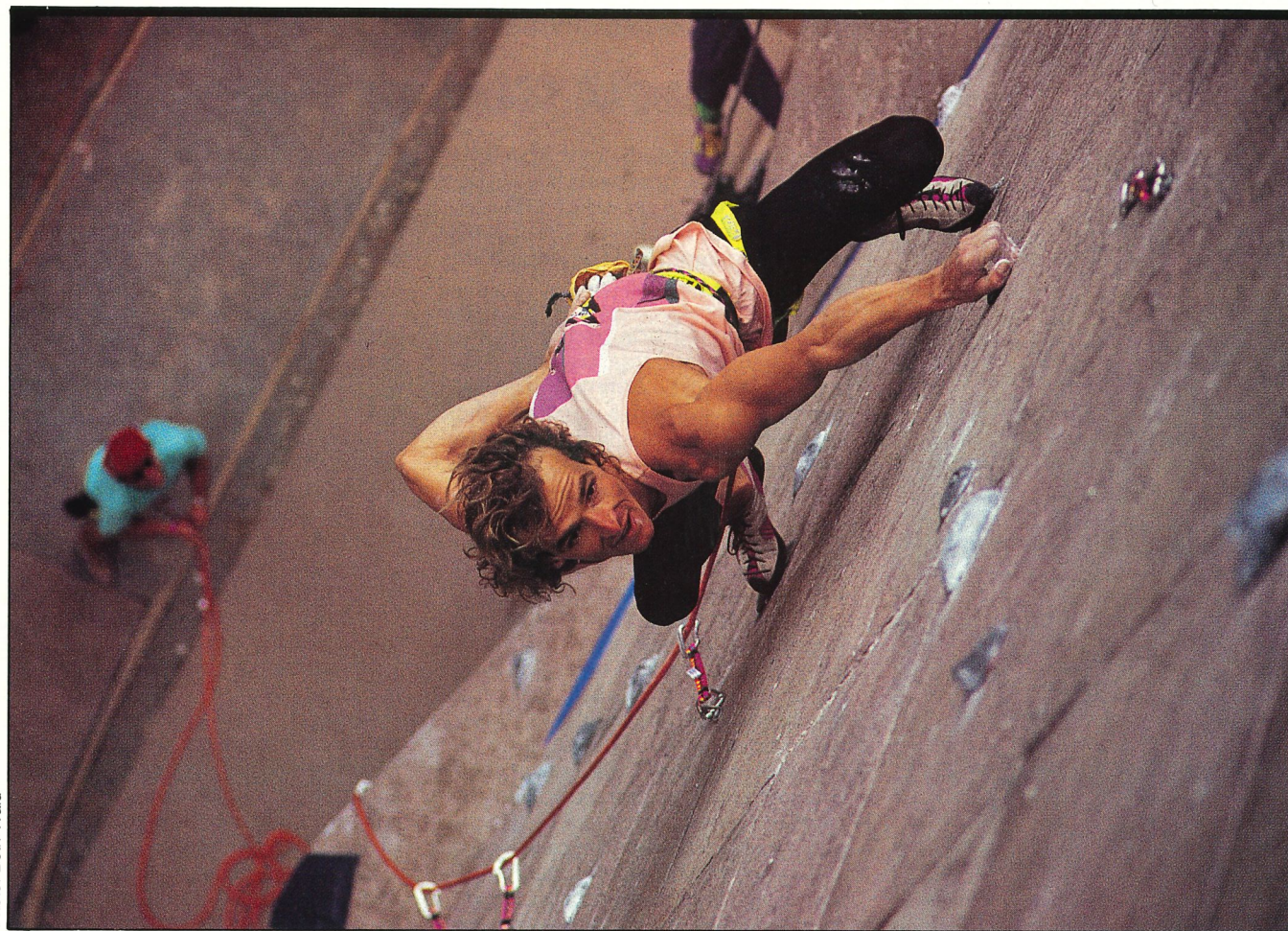
With the organizers directing all their efforts toward the completion of the wall in time for the event, little time was left for addressing the rules.

ISCC Rule 12 was somewhat vague on out-of-bounds infractions: "The competitors are not allowed to use holds beyond the colored lines which

delimit the course. In case a part of the body goes beyond the lines, the judges will establish whether this was used for support or only for balance."

Not sure of whether or not Raboutou touched the out of bounds "for support or only for balance," the judges were at a loss. At some point in the discussion, the relevant and similarly vague UIAA rule was brought up: "A climber will be halted and the high point recorded, if the climber crosses over the route boundaries" (Article 13). Adopting a strict interpretation of this rule would definitely disqualify Raboutou.

According to Cannon, he had proposed the use of Denali Productions' videos to verify judges calls prior to the contest. "But," says Cannon,



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 Marc 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 adrenalin. 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 nimbly over the bulge but blew a dyno low on the vertical section, uttering a healthy "Merde!" while airborne.

It was immediately obvious that the final route was reachy 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.

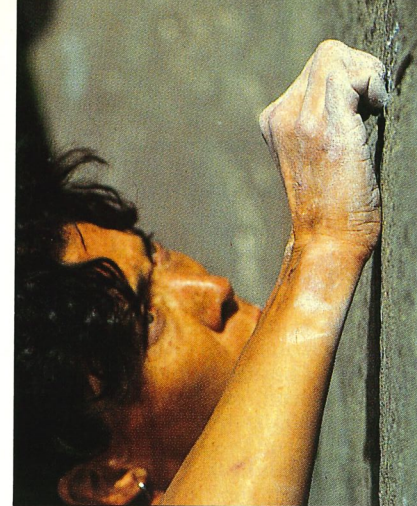
French hopeful Jean-Baptiste Tribout looked incredibly strong. At the same point where LeMénestrel had lost his balance, Tribout reached and patted high, a technique employed by experienced competitors to mark maximum height should they fall doing the next moves. But Cannon, hanging just above, perceived Tri-

out's slap 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 peeled off.

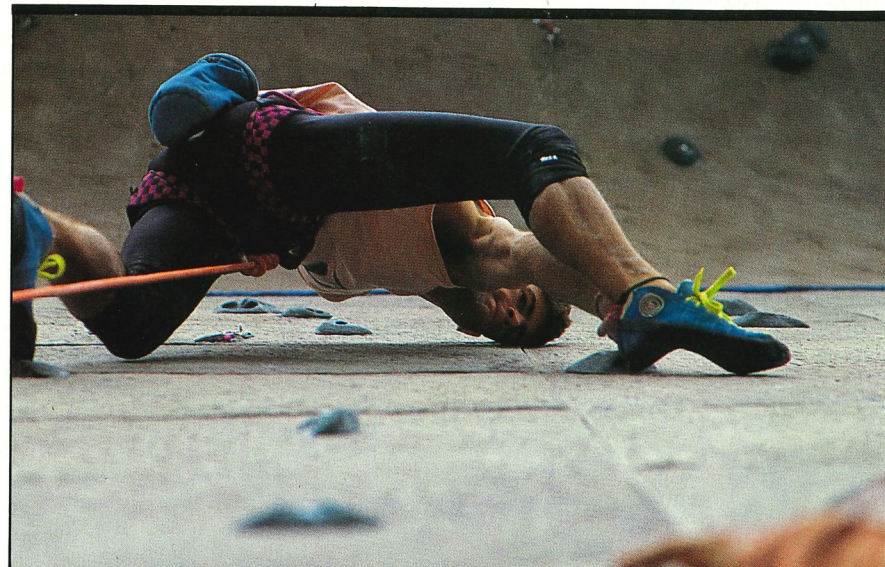
Once again Saturday's surprise performer, Jason Stern, came out relaxed, but he fell below LeMénestrel and Tribout's high points. Martin Atkinson then put in a redeeming performance. The testy spot at the seventh bolt spit him off when he caught a finger in a carabiner while lunging, but he had barely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

Saturday's top woman finisher, Corrine 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 troubles where Gingery had, falling upside down just after touching the two-finger pocket next to the fifth bolt.

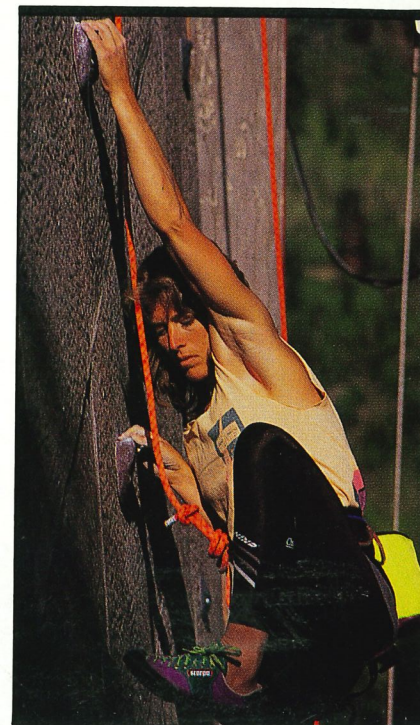
Christian Griffith looked as solid as he did on Saturday, and the crowd was behind him all the way to his high



Patrick Edlinger, the only competitor to flash the 5.13b final course (left), was in a league of his own at Snowbird. Christian Griffith (below) couldn't hold this heel hook much longer and ended up in sixth place. Dark horse Mari Gingery (above) crimping on a razor-sized edge in the finals. It was a tie between her and Lynn Hill (right) when Catherine Destivelle stepped in as the last climber. The route's reachy nature frustrated many of the women.



Photos: Michael Kennedy



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 bewilderment. 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 clapping 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 sidepulls 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

point just centimeters below Stern's. Then, everyone's hopes for Ron Kauk were dashed when he fell at the bulge, slipping off in an apparent mental lapse. Patissier and Weigand 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 didn't hang out at the "in" crags with the likes of Tribout, Antoine and Marc LeMénestrel, and Raboutou. 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.

Shoeing 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, 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 5.13 crux, he barely hesitated, locking off and stuffing a digit into the one-finger pocket no one else had touched. Bedlam broke loose below as he pulled up under the roof.

There, he saw no chalk on the holds. He worked into the roof, and coolly 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

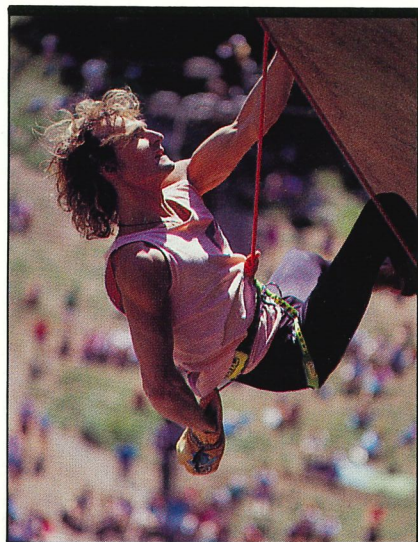


Photo: Chris Noble

Edlinger (above) pulling over the roof on Sunday to the roar of the crowd. Catherine Destivelle (right) set to lunge 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.

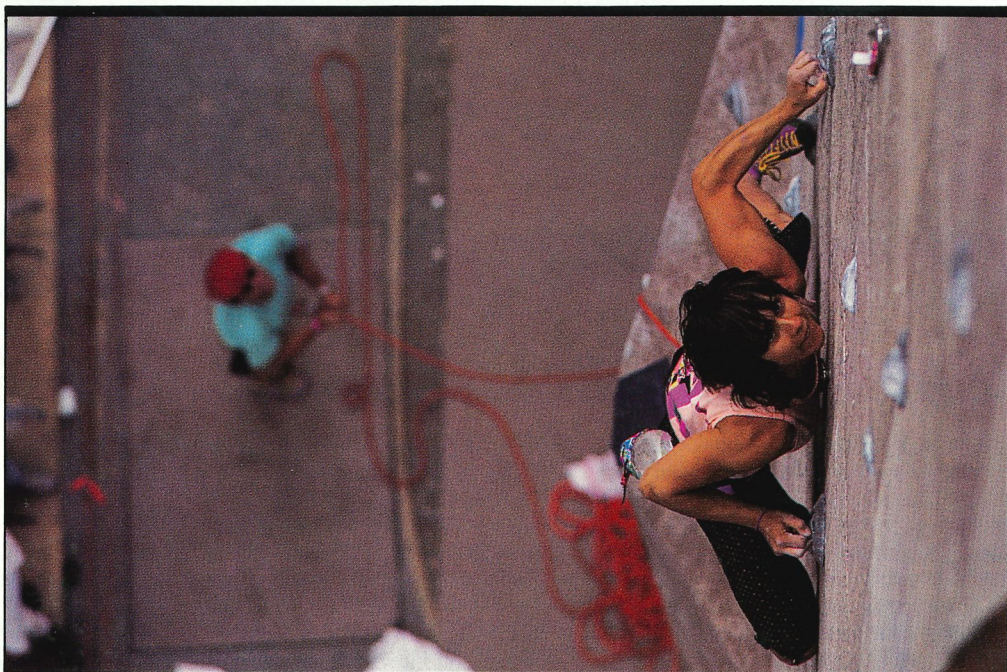


Photo: Chris Noble

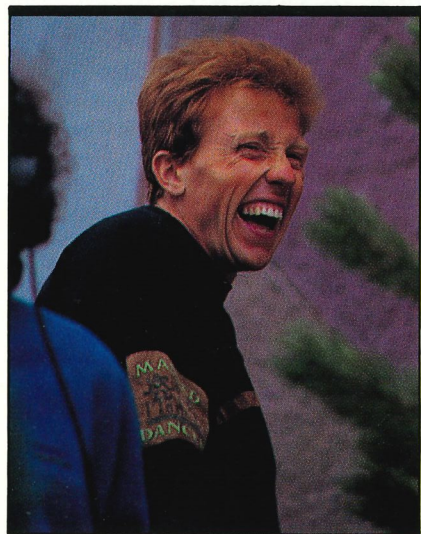


Photo: Michael Kennedy

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 lunged from hold to hold. "It was just climbers out climbing," said one competitor.

FINAL STANDINGS

Men

1. Patrick Edlinger
2. Jean-Baptiste Tribout
3. Marc LeMénestrel
4. Martin Atkinson
5. Jason Stern
6. Christian Griffith
7. Scott Franklin
8. Alex Duboc
8. Geoff Weigand
10. Ron Kauk

Women

1. Catherine Destivelle
2. Lynn Hill
2. Mari Gingery
4. Isabelle Patissier
5. Corrine LaBrune
6. Jennifer Cole

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 Sibley, meant more to him than winning the competition.

He went further, explaining that his goal was not to win but "to climb the route proposed to him, and to show others what climbing is all about. I did it for all the people who love climbing." He disagrees with the technique of patting high points with chalk. "Climbing is too noble for that type of action," he says. And he hopes kids who may have been fascinated by the event don't get the idea that the goal is

simply to climb higher than anyone else. "Climbing," he says, "is not a sport, it is a way of life. The way you get to the top expresses who you are, your values, the type of life you're living."

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.

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