

USA Climbing Coach Summit

MONDAY & TUESDAY DECEMBER 15-16, 2025



Where Olympic & Paralympic Journeys Begin

Welcome & Summit Overview

- Wifi access
- USAC Guest
- Password: kodiakcakes25!





State of High Performance in the U.S.

- Overview of current pathway
- NT structure
- International benchmarks

2026 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR | SUCCEED INTERNATIONALLY

Performance of US Athletes at IFSC Competitions	# of unique athlete's to make a final	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 GOAL / YTD
	Elite	15	11	15	15	
	Para	17	22	26	30	
	Youth	26	15	12	10 (2 categories)	
	Total number of finals appearances	2022	2023	2024	2025	
	Boulder	11	15	7	12	
	Lead	19	8	6	10	
	Speed	27	17	23	28	
	Para	22	43	40	60	
	# of Podiums at IFSC Comps	2022	2023	2024	2025 YTD	2026 GOAL / YTD
Elite	29	12	12	16		
Para	18	32	32	39		
Youth	4	4	4	2		

BREAK



Alternative uses



Performance Gaps: Youth → Adult Transition

- Identify gaps, barriers, and opportunities
- Coach input and shared examples

Performance Gaps: Youth → Adult Transition

<u>MISSING</u>	<u>UNDERPERFORMING</u>	<u>MISALIGNED</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of the end goal/gap definition• Opportunity to compete at high level exposure/experience• Youth belonging/culture• Staggered eligibility at elite comps• Youth elite training camps• Modeling athletes + Modeling coaches• Regional Hubs• Info funnel• HP System/process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coach development• Info /communication dissemination• collaboration USAC ↔ Regional ↔ Regional• Coach skills to provide athlete pathway training• Elite athlete pathway definition/outline• More kids/athletes in Sport• System preparation of influx + LA28?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth → adult season training strategy/schedule pathway• Recreational league vs. comp league• Commercial gyms• financial obligations• USAC Goals + Youth program goals• Event simulation<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Leading age- Setting- Speed environment

LUNCH



Athlete Quotes

Quote 1:

- What made the youth-to-elite transition work for me was finding a group of athletes who were training just as hard as I wanted to. That environment raised my expectations, kept me consistent, and helped me understand the demands of elite competition. Creating more opportunities for young athletes to train with peers at a similar level would be a huge way for USA Climbing to support that transition. Things such as training camps are great ways to get athletes connected with each other.

Quote 2:

- My best training and learning experiences were always when I got to climb and be pushed by my friends and competitors who were at my level or better. Opportunities like the training camps before Youth Worlds or Team Trials were great because we all pushed each other to improve and learn as much as possible. So the biggest thing I would've changed about my training while transitioning from youth to the elite circuit would be to seek out more training opportunities with my peers.

Quote 3:

- Having pre season camp for the kids who are eligible for youth worlds to get to know the usac coaches
- I think having youth nats at the tc is great cuz it gives exposure
- Making the NACS (not necessarily nationals) open to u17 as a good transition before nationals
- Kids are intimidated by the open competitions so trying to climb with them in a chill environment

Athlete Quotes

Quote 4:

- Getting to compete in lots of open comps (Nationals, Team Trials, NACSs, etc) gave me a lot of experience competing in high level finals which was super beneficial for me to start transitioning to the Elite circuit.
- I think it would be super helpful if USAC communicated and encouraged youth athletes to bring their coaches to Elite comps to support them and help them make the transition from Elite Youth. In addition, I think USAC could be clearer on when youth athletes will be eligible to compete in Elite. I've found that if it was a bit confusing and having it be clear will help youth athletes plan out their training and goals.
- It can be daunting to start to compete alongside adults in the Elite circuit but I've found that focusing on being a smart and skillful competitor can be very helpful to succeed in Elite comps while youth athletes are still developing their strength and power. Also, remembering that every Elite comp is a learning opportunity that gives you more experience as you transition from Youth to Elite.

Youth Programming & Pipeline

- Youth programming models
- Athlete experience and expectations
- Coach experience and expectations
- Stakeholder experience and expectations



Youth Programming & Pipeline.

- **Definition/Objective:** Alignment between setting / coaches profile of an athlete/good climbing that wins World Cups. Lessons learned at trials

Critical Success Factors:

Athlete and Coach Pathway - defined
Define success within the process and levels of competition
Coach expectations
Communication between Athletes and Parents
Individuality
Facility/\$/value proposition
Wining?

Recommendations:

Season report
Debrief after each WC and distribute
Video examples and written explanations
Shared Language
Athlete profile/trick chart/heat map / Adaptability - Prepare them for anything vs predicting?
Data collection - athlete retention, coach retention, performance of athletes

Metrics: Movement types, measurements, create tests for boulders? Capacity and consistency in problem solving/skillset.



Youth Program Pipeline

- exposure to success
- introducing the "idea" of competing to all levels/ages
- opportunity to train/climb/compete with others outside of their own team with different levels (regional → national)
 - ↳ how does USAC support this?
- Metrics
 - longevity in sport
 - coach retention, coach consistency
- Coaches define success
- Athlete Expectations: Agency, athletic communication
- Coaches Expectations: Define success, communication w/ Athletes and parents, support individuality
- Stakeholders - gyms, volunteers, Parents
- Expectations: being profitable

Missing

- coaches
- structure
 - athlete autonomy?
- Education
 - what is the next step
- End goal / target ^{written}
- Setting access
- Performance rep's (making it to the next competition)
- Maturing of Athletes
 - thinking for yourself
- Coach continued Education

Underperforming

- collaboration working w/ other programs and coaches (sharing lesson plans, coaches EAOs)
- underperforming regions/divisions
- Collegiate (NCAA)

Misaligned

- goal of the program
 - high performance
 - building life-long climbers
- long term development
 - late bloomers
 - currently we select for the "now"
- Debrief after championships
 - coaches, setters, athletes
- taboo subjects
 - weight and dieting

Elite Nationals/NTT Format

Exploration of consistency vs. the flash in the pan

BONUS POINTS

- should we lower the bar for bonus points?

ELITE NATS/NTT

FORMAT → 3 Separate Events

IFSC Alignment

- ↳ ~~POMP~~
- ↳ Create "Adverse Conditions"
- ↳ Resilience + Adaptability

PRESSURE / STAKES

* Depth

Brainstorms

- Define and or create an Objective for...
- Critical Success Factors
- Recommendations/Reinforcements
- What metrics could be implemented

Youth Nationals Format / Environment

- Nationals format
- Athlete experience and expectations
- Coach experience and expectations
- Stakeholder experience and expectations



Youth Nationals Format / Environment

- **Definition/Objective:** Sets athletes up for success (multidiscipline), showcase, select, develop, Replicate Youth WC

Critical Success Factors:

Record Setting - public, national/regional

Learn from the past and adapt for now?

Recommendations:

Replicate Youth WC (Show/energy/walkout)

Production (Palmer)

Regional representation vs club and or listed
Earning of spots?

Separate Nationals - Format? Gap between?

What's the right window between?

Showcasing - social media

Metrics:



BREAK



Elite Nationals & National Team Trials Format/Environment

- Assess current formats
- Align with IFSC expectations
- Simulate pressure and stakes

Elite Nationals & National Team Trials Format/Environment

- **Definition/Objective:** Create a pinnacle event? Nationals v Trials

Critical Success Factors:

Recommendations:

3 separate events? Pride in National Champs?
Better than a WC.

Selection - subjective, discretion opportunity,
bonus points.

Incentivization - to stay in the game

Metrics:



DINNER

Red Rock Brewery @ 7:30p



Recap & Reflections from Day 1



Setting for High Performance

- Routesetting that reflects international demands
- Difficulty, style, density, pacing

Setting for High Performance

Critical Success Factors:

Quali v semi/final styles

US Qualifiers - make harder? Increase levels to decrease the gap to WC

Language - nuances

Resources/space/holds/volumes/adaptability

Is setting the problem or coaching the problem?

Create environments for setters/athletes/coaches

Are we chasing the new move? What makes climbing hard? What are the components / coordination needs for the athletes? How are we communicating/framing

Setting at US v Intl.

Pressure to qualify v competing at an international comp.

Coach input into routesetting?

Recommendations:

Routesetting context HP, commercial, participation

Other countries setting - commercial is harder

Comp sets into commercial sets

Instructions/insight to the route

HP - Do we create guidelines/intentions?

Lack of cohesion and intention

Coach v setters - collaborative buy in

Level of skill/strength

Setters - Athletes collaboration

Require all athletes to attend Nationals Use athletes and setters afterwards

Showcase and include our athletes? NACS, Nationals (more points?)

USA values of what climbing is



BREAK



What You're Seeing: Regional Coach Insights

- Regional coaches share observations on athlete development, gaps, and needs

What You're Seeing: Regional Coach Insights

David Hudson

Growth at grassroots level, big teams, not at HP level

Independent teams dissolving

Good:

- Support from big Gyms

- Collaboration

Size of region is difficult

Are the athletes strong enough? Climb the grade?

Lack of:

- Mental game - coaching of

- Level 4 or 5 setters

- High level coaching opportunities/development/visits

Example: We can create community amongst coaches in and across divisions

Maurice Cureton

Disparity within Region/Division

Athlete preparation/clarity for Nationals

Value in developing through youth?

- Clinics +ve

- More regional collaboration needed

- Good variety in setting and level

- D

- Geography divides us

- Consistent coaching = good results

- Connected coaches across region and all stakeholders, coach socials

- High turnover of coaches - lack of depth

- Setting dropped off



What You're Seeing: Regional Coach Insights

Mike Rougeux

Geography divides us

Consistent coaching = good results

Connected coaches across region and all stakeholders, coach socials

High turnover of coaches - lack of depth

Setting dropped off

Older infrastructure

Athlete retention is difficult within the region

Commercial gyms lack after school programs even though they get the most 'new' climbers and have not hosted a USAC event for a while.

Lost high level competition series

Mission of the ownership of facilities aligned with USAC and regions?

Palmer Larson

Share outside the region

Large region - travel

Tension between HP and participation in a team to be financially viable

U11 great addition

Open door for different coaches and athletes

Influx of high level athletes into region - difficult to manage

Potential model for gyms, setters, coaches, athletes

Can broader audience (more regions) receive more resources



What We're Seeing in SLC: Athlete Trends & Training Insights

- Trends from daily training
- Testing insights
- Implications of remote environments

What We're Seeing in SLC: Athlete Trends & Training Insights

Josh

Setting rotation to increase coming through the TC

Increase the collaboration with coaches

The team is changing annually makes consistency hard

4 week window to tune them up before first WC.

Adjustment to work on weaknesses

Can we get more consistency in selection?

Can we share within the pipeline what to help prepare for
WC level

Prague simulation activities as a 'team'

Matt

Speed

Absolute Force

Anaerobic

Lead and Boulder

No overarching program

Weekly

Force plates

Programming

Movement analysis

1-1 create a program

Long term vision and plan

Integrate Physio's / Dietician, Psych

Injury reduction



LUNCH



Leveraging the SLC High Performance Center

- What we have here and how to extend SLC Resources (training, medical, m S&C, testing) to non-SLC athletes and programs

Leveraging the SLC High Performance Center

- Schedule collaborative calls
- The next summit?
- Regional HP Centers
- United Goal and Process
- Mindful of how much we are trying to do
- Start at grassroots - regional ideas
- Regional Training Centers (USAC sanctioned)
 - Terrain, setting holds
 - People - coaches and service providers
 - Incentives to national team athletes A/B/C
 - Education lead - all areas of performance
 - Mandatory deliverables
 - Lane access (intermediate option)
 - Connection between regional and club coach
- More Coach Education levels/qualifications/mentorship



NGB Examples of HP Systems

- Design cadence, format, and expectations for ongoing calls and information flow

Regional Connection Model

- Define how HP staff and regional coaches share information and support athletes.
- Regional training sites - embed additional resources, youth programming, etc.
- Communication - between all stakeholders

Closing & Next Steps

- Main points
- Action items
- Quarterly touchpoints & communication structure
- Coach Summit future iterations

Wrap-Up

