

**2026.05 Team Selection Discretion Execution**  
**Sovarae Sanders WCL Series Innsbruck Boulder Start**  
**(via athlete)**

**PROPOSAL/REQUEST**

- Athlete has requested a discretionary boulder start at Innsbruck
- Request was also sent to AC

**DECISION**

- The TSC has voted to apply discretion
- Decision by TSC on 2026.05.28

**BACKGROUND**

- See request submitted (below) by Sovarae Sanders
- The request was evaluated against the priorities previously established by the TSC for evaluating Team Selection Discretion (TSD).
- The request was evaluated against the registration of interest of all Pre-select (PS), National Team (NT), and National Development Team (NDT) members.
- The request was evaluated against available quota for WCL Series Innsbruck - Boulder.

**DISCUSSION**

- The TSC reviewed the previously established priorities for TSD consideration.
- The current NT ranking of the proposal athlete was confirmed and reviewed.
- The availability of a bouldering start at Innsbruck was confirmed.
- It was confirmed that no current PS, NT, or NDT athlete had interest in the remaining available start.
- Precedent for non-PS, NT, or NDT starts was reviewed.
- Relevant USAC and WCL registration deadlines were reviewed.

- The TSC decision was to apply discretion (the proposal was approved).
- The Team Selection Procedures (TSP) will be reviewed and changes considered to address similar scenarios to this proposal in the future.

## **SUBMISSION**

Danny Popowski via [usaclimbing.org](https://usaclimbing.org) May 27, 2026 1:24pm

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Sovarae Sanders <[sovaraesanders@gmail.com](mailto:sovaraesanders@gmail.com)>

Date: Wed, May 27, 2026 at 11:01 AM

Subject: Request for Exception to Compete at Innsbruck World Cup-Expedite Needed

To: <[ac@usaclimbing.org](mailto:ac@usaclimbing.org)>

Request for Exception to Compete at Innsbruck World Cup

To the USA Climbing Athlete Commission,

Timeline Consideration:

The timeline for this decision is extremely tight. The deadline to remove the athlete who turned down the start is June 2, while the deadline to register a replacement athlete is June 12. Because of this limited window, I respectfully ask that this request be considered promptly so USA Climbing can fully utilize its available competition spots and avoid losing a valuable athlete development opportunity.

I am respectfully requesting discretion allowing me to compete at the Innsbruck World Cup. I understand the importance of maintaining selection procedures and administrative consistency,

but I believe granting this exception would ultimately align positively with USA Climbing's long-term competitive interests.

### Competitive Progression and Readiness

I am currently one spot outside the USA Climbing Development Team, which demonstrates that I am already performing at a level directly adjacent to national team selection.

My recent progression demonstrates consistent year-over-year improvement, as well as being consistently close to the development team:

- 2026 Elite Ranking: 11th
- 2025 Elite Ranking: 13th
- 2024 Elite Ranking: 14th

I placed 5th at the 2025 Pan American Cup and 2nd in U20 at Youth Nationals in 2025. Over the past three years, I have steadily progressed toward the national team and have been extremely close to making the development team.

The margin between me and the final Development Team position was extremely slim. The difference between my overall points total and the athlete in 10th place was only 12 points out of the possible 6000, and five athletes above me received bonus points.

### Why This Benefits USA Climbing

It is in USA Climbing's best interest to use as many available international competition spots as possible to develop upcoming athletes. International competitions like Innsbruck provide valuable experience that cannot be replicated domestically, including exposure to elite-level settings, international formats, and high-pressure competition environments. In addition, a hand-down past development team is not unheard of. It is

common practice when the USA hosts the World Cup, and in 2025, two starts were given to non-development team athletes.

Allowing athletes who are already close to the Development Team level to gain this experience helps:

- Develop future internationally competitive athletes
- Increase the depth of experienced U.S. competitors
- Strengthen future national team performance
- Maximize the value of available IFSC quota spots

Granting this exception would not require changing the overall selection system, but rather applying reasonable discretion in a situation where USA Climbing benefits from additional athlete development and representation.

Closing

I respectfully ask USA Climbing to consider the broader competitive and developmental value of allowing this exception for Innsbruck. I believe this decision would ultimately support both my growth as an athlete and USA Climbing's long-term interests.

Thank you for your consideration and for the continued work you do to support athletes and grow the sport.

Sincerely,

Sovarae Sanders.