

USA Climbing Para Climbing Series

National Team and Competition Start Benchmarks



Introduction

Beginning in 2027, to be eligible for USA Climbing Para Climbing National Team (NT) selection and World Climbing (WCL) Competition Starts (CS), an athlete must either:

- be Team Preselected; or
- achieve eligibility through at least one benchmark standard established under this section.

USA Climbing Para Climbing NT and CS eligibility may be achieved through:

- Objective World Climbing Ranking Benchmark;
- Predetermined USA Climbing Benchmark Hold (Score); or
- Team Selection Discretion (TSD).

Timing of NT and CS Eligibility

Prior to or at the conclusion of PNCH:

- Prior to or at the conclusion of the USA Climbing Para Climbing National Championship (PNCH), NT and CS eligibility are achieved together. The same criteria that grant NT eligibility also grant CS eligibility.
- Athletes who achieve eligibility prior to or at the conclusion of PNCH, including through prior Team Selection Discretion, are eligible to be considered for National Team selection based on PNCH results.

After the conclusion of PNCH:

- After the conclusion of PNCH, athletes may continue to achieve CS eligibility but may not newly achieve NT eligibility until the next applicable National Team selection process.
- Athletes who achieve eligibility after the conclusion of PNCH are not retroactively named to the National Team based on PNCH results.
- An athlete may initially be named to the National Development Team (NDT) following PNCH and later achieve CS eligibility through one of the eligibility pathways described in this section.

The Para Climbing Series National Team and Competition Start Benchmarks are maintained by the USA Climbing Team Selection Committee and are subject to approval by the USA Climbing Chief Executive Officer and USA Climbing Chief of Sport.

Questions regarding the Para Climbing Benchmarks may be directed to the USA Climbing Team Selection Committee at teamselection@usaclimbing.org.

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Objective World Climbing Ranking Benchmark

A Para Climbing athlete achieves either NT and CS eligibility or CS eligibility only (as set forth in the “Timing of NT and CS Eligibility” section) based on World Climbing event ranking if: ¹

- in the current calendar year or either of the prior two (2) calendar years,
- the athlete qualified for a Final round in their sport class² at a:
 - World Climbing Para Climbing Series event, or
 - World Climbing World Championship.

Predetermined USA Climbing Benchmark Hold (Score)

USA Climbing Para Climbing benchmark grades are shown in the benchmark grade table below.³

A Para Climbing athlete achieves either NT and CS eligibility or CS eligibility only (as set forth in the “Timing of NT and CS Eligibility” section) if:

- in the current calendar year or the prior one (1) calendar year,
- the athlete achieves the designated benchmark hold score⁴ for a route⁵.

Sport Class Women	USA Climbing Benchmark		Sport Class Men	USA Climbing Benchmark
AU2 Women	6b/5.10d		AU2 Men	6c/5.11b
AU3 Women	6b/5.10d		AU3 Men	6c/5.11b
AL1 Women	5c/5.10a		AL1 Men	6a/5.10b
AL2 Women	6b/5.10d		AL2 Men	6c/5.11b
RP1 Women	5c/5.10a		RP1 Men	6a/5.10b
RP2 Women	6a/5.10b		RP2 Men	6b/5.10d
RP3 Women	6b/5.10d		RP3 Men	6c/5.11b
B1 Women	6a/5.10b		B1 Men	6b/5.10d
B2 Women	6a/5.10b		B2 Men	6b/5.10d
B3 Women	6a/5.10b		B3 Men	6b/5.10d

¹ Ranking benchmarks for 2028 and later seasons are subject to change.

² This applies only to sport classes meeting the minimum registration requirements for inclusion in World Ranking. An athlete is considered to have qualified for Finals if their qualification ranking within their sport class would have advanced to the Final round, regardless of any combined sport-class competition format.

³ The benchmark grades are set by USA Climbing based on review of WCL setting guidelines and route difficulties at recent WCL and USA Climbing events.

Benchmark grades for 2028 and later seasons are subject to change.

⁴ The designated benchmark hold (score) for a route is determined by the USA Climbing Chief of Sport (or their designated proxy) in consultation with the Head Routesetter. Other USA Climbing High Performance staff may be consulted as well. The designated benchmark hold is communicated to the competitors via either: a placard on the route, or a Topo annotated with the benchmark hold that is published or posted at least sixty (60) minutes prior to the start of the round.

The designated benchmark hold for a route is intended to represent performance at the applicable USA Climbing benchmark grade for the Sport Class. The benchmark grade represents the climbing difficulty up to and including the designated benchmark hold. The remainder of the route is used for further rank separation in the competition.

A route set for more than one sport class that has a benchmark hold designated will have a benchmark hold designated for each such sport class. The holds may be the same or different between sport classes.

⁵ A benchmark hold (score) can only be designated for the purposes of NT/CS eligibility at a USA Climbing Para Climbing event (including a USA Climbing Para Climbing training camp) where the Head Routesetter is a USA Climbing Level 5 (L5) Para Climbing Routesetter.

At the discretion of USA Climbing Chief of Sport (or their designated proxy), a route may or may not have a designated benchmark hold, and an event may have all, some, or no routes with designated benchmark holds. This information will be shared in the event's Info Sheet.

For example, the possibilities at a PNCH include (but are not limited to):

- a designated benchmark hold on all routes
- a designated benchmark hold only on one or both of the qualification round routes

An athlete achieves the relevant eligibility if they are awarded a score that is at least as high as the route's designated benchmark hold (score) for the route, for at least one route.

Team Selection Discretion

A Para Climbing athlete may achieve either NT and CS eligibility or CS eligibility only (as set forth in the “Timing of NT and CS Eligibility” section) via Team Selection Discretion (TSD).

USA Climbing High Performance staff or the USA Climbing Athlete Advisory Committee may submit a TSD proposal on behalf of an athlete requesting NT and CS eligibility. A TSD proposal may be submitted before, during, or after PNCH. All discretionary eligibility determinations are made through the TSD process.

A TSD proposal must:

- include performance-based statements from USA Climbing High Performance staff and/or USA Climbing L5 Para Climbing Routesetters,
- where such statements:
 - support the athlete’s readiness to competitively participate in WCL Para Climbing events,
 - are based on direct observation of the athlete’s performance; and
 - reference the athlete’s performance relative to the applicable USA Climbing benchmark grade for the Sport Class.

TSD proposals will be evaluated:

- by the USA Climbing Team Selection Discretion process, as set forth in the Team Selection Procedures, and
- against the applicable benchmark standards, including whether the athlete’s demonstrated performance is consistent with the applicable benchmark grade.

For WCL Para Climbing events hosted by USA Climbing:

- a TSD proposal may request, or USA Climbing Team Selection may grant, CS eligibility limited solely to WCL events hosted by USA Climbing, and
- Team Selection Discretion may apply a modified or relaxed eligibility standard to support athlete development.