

2026.09 Team Selection Discretion Execution

Nathan Sato – Lead World Climbing Series Santiago Start

PROPOSAL / REQUEST

- High Performance staff requested that Team Selection Discretion be applied to grant **Nathan Sato** a start at the 2026 World Climbing Series Santiago Lead event.
- Under the standard Team Selection Procedures and National Team Ranking priority, the available start would otherwise be allocated to **Bryce Nix**.
- The request was based on maximizing U.S. athlete CUWR Top-40 finishes, athlete readiness and development, and preparation for the 2027 season.

DECISION

- The Team Selection Committee voted to **apply Team Selection Discretion and grant Nathan Sato the Santiago Lead start**.
- The decision results in Nathan receiving the start that would otherwise have been allocated to Bryce Nix under the standard Team Selection Procedures.
- The decision is specific to the circumstances presented for Santiago and does not constitute a re-ranking of the athletes or establish priority for 2027 selection or future World Climbing Series starts.

BACKGROUND

- Santiago is the final Lead World Climbing Series event of the 2026 season.
- Nathan is ranked **9th** in the 2026 USA Climbing National Team Ranking with **2,127 points**. Bryce is ranked **8th** with **2,161 points**.
- Nathan has earned **80 CUWR points from 2026 events**, compared with **30 for Bryce**.
- Nathan has received **one 2026 WCS Lead start**, while Bryce has received **two 2026 WCS Lead starts**.
- The TSC previously considered replacing Bryce with Nathan for the Koper start. The Committee did not apply discretion at that time and allowed the start to be allocated under the standard Team Selection Procedures.
- Bryce subsequently competed at Koper and earned additional CUWR points.
- HP staff submitted the current proposal based on the athletes' current CUWR positions, recent competition results, athlete readiness and development, and the importance of the remaining 2026 opportunity in preparation for 2027.

DISCUSSION

- The TSC considered the request against the previously established priority of maximizing the number of U.S. athletes finishing the season in the CUWR Top 40.
 - Both Nathan and Bryce face a challenging path to the Top 40. Nathan, however, currently has **80 CUWR points from 2026 events compared with Bryce's 30**, placing Nathan closer to the potential year-end Top-40 threshold.
 - The Committee reviewed the athletes' 2026 international competition results, including their World Climbing Series results and Nathan's third-place finish at the Salt Lake City Pan America Series, and considered the relative strength of those events when evaluating the results.
 - The Committee considered input and recommendations from High Performance staff regarding athlete performance, readiness, and development. HP staff input was considered as expert information together with the objective competition and ranking data.
 - In particular, HP recommended Nathan for the Santiago start and assessed that **“Nathan is presently in the strongest position to maximize the Santiago start compared with other eligible athletes.”** The Committee gave weight to that assessment together with the objective results and other information available.
 - The TSC had previously considered a potential substitution of Nathan for Bryce before Koper and elected not to apply discretion at that time. Bryce subsequently received the Koper start and earned additional CUWR points.
 - Santiago presents a different circumstance because it is the **final Lead World Climbing Series opportunity of the 2026 season**.
 - The Committee also considered the importance of entering 2027 with multiple athletes prepared for selection and potential WCS competition as part of USA Climbing's Olympic preparation.
 - Nathan has received one 2026 WCS Lead start, while Bryce has received two. In considering the final 2026 start, the Committee relied in part on HP's recommendation regarding which athlete was presently best positioned to maximize the Santiago opportunity. Granting the start to Nathan also provides additional WCS experience to an athlete with fewer 2026 WCS opportunities and broadens the group of athletes entering 2027 with recent WCS experience.
 - This consideration was not treated as a selection of Nathan over Bryce for 2027 or as establishing priority for future starts. Rather, it supports preparing multiple athletes for future selection and international competition while following HP's assessment of how the final 2026 opportunity could best be utilized.
 - The Committee recognizes that athlete development and the distribution of international competition experience are evolving considerations in TSD evaluation and expects to continue discussion with High Performance regarding their application for the 2027 cycle.
-

SUBMISSION

From: Francesca Caiazzo <fcaiazzo@usacimbing.org>

Date: Tue, Sep 22, 2026 at 8:22 PM

Subject: Santiago Discretionary Proposal - Nathan Sato

To: Team Selection Committee <teamselection@usacimbing.org>, High Performance <highperformance@usacimbing.org>, Marc Norman <Marc@usacimbing.org>, Josh Larson <josh@usacimbing.org>

Hi TSC,

We're submitting a proposal for a discretionary start for Nathan Sato at the Lead World Series in Santiago. Granting this start supports our priority of maximizing the team's Top-40 finishes for the season and will provide a significant development opportunity for Nathan. Santiago is the final Lead World Series of the season and the last opportunity to earn additional ranking points.

Nathan is currently ranked 63rd in the CUWR and after his ranking points from last season drop off, he will still have 80 CUWR points. Many of those points came from his recent bronze medal performance at the Pan American Series in Salt Lake City. That result moved him significantly closer to the Top-40 and demonstrated his ability to perform at the international level, showing the significant physical and mental progress that he has made since Wujiang.

The Committee previously noted that approximately 400-450 CUWR points are reasonably expected to be needed for a Top-40 finish. When considering World Rankings from only 2026 events, the current 40th ranked athlete has only 270 points. Based on this data and current registrations for the Santiago WS, we anticipate the cutoff being lower than previous years, closer to 350-400. Reaching that range would require a significant result, but Nathan remains in the strongest position to maximize a start in Santiago compared to other eligible athletes.

Nathan's recent Pan American Series result, current CUWR position, and limited number of World Series opportunities this season make Santiago a valuable opportunity. A start in Santiago would allow him to build on the progress he has shown this season, pursue additional CUWR points, and continue to build international experience needed to perform consistently at the World Series level.

Thanks for the time and consideration!

HP Staff