

But this is by no means the only precautionary measure contemplated by the UIAA-ICC in the rules for a sport that – by its very nature – is not entirely without perils.

In an effort to maintain the unique spirit of competitiveness between the climber and the climb, the UIAA-ICC puts great emphasis on retaining mountaineering's traditional sportsmanship, aiming at preserving congruence between climbing as a performance sport and as a *school for life*.

A School for Life

It should not surprise that sport climbing has recently been added to the curriculum of national physical education programs in many countries: Austria, France and Singapore among them.

“Competition climbing events are the celebration of athletic courage. The UIAA-ICC wants all young people to have the opportunity to try climbing.”
Marco Scolaris, UIAA-ICC President

“Climbing is a completely natural movement which promotes coordination and balance in the most enjoyable manner.”
Robert Pelousek, Austrian Deputy Minister for Education



An educator and climbing instructor in the USA puts it differently: “Fun can be hard - it's *hard fun* to climb competitively and embark on a course of self-improvement. Fun can come from conquering a route or a tough move. The discipline of building muscles, flexibility, and endurance can be fun. Trying hard and getting beat by a friend can be fun. Beating that same friend the next time out can also be fun.”

At the Highest Level

Competition climbing started in the 1960s with speed events in the former USSR. In the 1980s, rock climbing standards had reached levels where interest developed to compare the climbers' skills more

directly and to stage actual competitions. Various formats were tried: a first difficulty competition was held near Turin, ITA, in 1985.

Today, as part of the UIAA, the ICC develops, promotes and regulates all international climbing competition:

Annual World Cup Series
Biannual Continental Championships
Biannual World Championships
Annual Youth World Championships

National federations and associations enter teams and individuals in either:

Speed (*top rope* – the fastest climber is the winner);
Bouldering (*without ropes* – the climber who completes the most obstacles wins);
Difficulty (*leading* – the climber who climbs highest is the winner).

The three disciplines are staged on specially erected climbing walls outdoors or indoors, in large arenas or exhibition halls.

UIAA-ICC sanctioned competitions are held exclusively on artificial walls for sporting reasons – setting the routes is easier and the field of play is more consistent – and also to avoid any kind of negative impact on the environment.

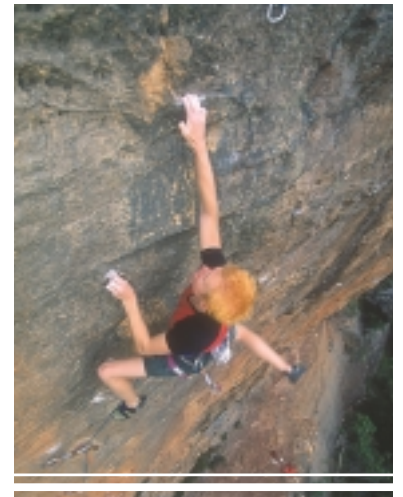
This has added to the popularity of artificial climbing walls everywhere: in gyms, parks and other facilities for sports and recreation around the world. In fact, the term *Rockodrom* has established itself in a number of languages for a venue dedicated exclusively to competition climbing.

The Athletes

Many thousands of athletes take part in local, regional and national climbing competitions organized by 52 UIAA member federations and associations on all continents.



The almost incredible exploits of the very best athletes has raised the standards for rock climbing considerably.



Competition climbing champions Hans Florian and Yuji Hiriyama have both mastered the 900 meters of El Capitan's nose at Yosemite National Park in California, USA, in under three hours; a climb which took several days in the past. Lynn Hill has succeeded in making the only free ascent of the equally high but even more difficult Salathe Wall.

The most recent UIAA-ICC World Rankings (December 2002) for international competitors list 183 female and 197 top athletes in the three disciplines. The five best women and men per discipline are:

Bouldering – Women
PERLOVA Natalia UKR
MOTTEAU Myriam FRA
JAKOVLEVA Olga RUS
THEROUX Corinne FRA
RANDS Lisa USA
Bouldering – Men
CORE Christian ITA
SMITH Malcolm GBR
MEYER Jérôme FRA
FISCHHUBER Kilian AUT
DULAC Daniel FRA
Speed – Women
REPKO Elena UKR
PIRATINSKAIA Maïia RUS
IOURINA Valentina RUS
ZAKHAROVA Olga UKR
SAOULEVITCH Olesia RUS
Speed – Men
PECHEKHONOV Alexandre RUS
STENKOVOY Maxim UKR
SINITSYNE Serguei RUS
GADEEV Alexei RUS
SOUBOTINE Iakov RUS
Difficulty – Women
SARKANY Muriel BEL
LEVET Sandrine FRA
CUFAR Martina SLO
GROS Natalija SLO
SEDLMAYER Katrin GER
Difficulty – Men
CHABOT Alexandre FRA
MRÁZEK Tomáš CZE
POUVREAU Gérome FRA
CRESPI Flavio ITA
PETIT François FRA