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Barriers and Resources for Competitive Adaptive Rock Climbing

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Barriers and Resources for Competitive Adaptive Rock Climbing

Amy Griswold, OTS; Dr. Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

- 1 in 4 Americans has a serious disability (CDC, 2021).
- Frequent exercise reduces comorbidities that arise due to inactivity (Ries, 2019).
- Risk and challenge in rock climbing create positive eustress, athlete “becomes a warrior” (Chu et al., 2019).
- Competitive adaptive rock climbing is known as *paraclimbing*.
- Paraclimbing competitions are relatively new. Rules and regulations limit who can participate. Goal is inclusion in 2028 Paralympic Games (IFSC, 2021)

PROBLEM

Athlete and coach self-report demonstrated limited ability to engage in paraclimbing competitions.

PURPOSE

(1) Identify barriers to participation in competitive adaptive rock climbing for adults with a physical disability.



(2) Create and distribute virtual educational resources to meet the identified barriers.

METHODS



108 Participants

- Adaptive Climbers
- Adaptive rock-climbing coaches
- Staff members in climbing gyms
- Rock-climbing event volunteers

Participants anonymously completed a ten-minute mixed methods virtual survey on Microsoft Forms. Survey informed by the Doing, Being, Becoming, Belonging Framework by Ann Wilcock (Wilcock, 2006)

RESULTS

Top barriers from survey

1. Hard to find a grant
2. Adaptive equipment in competition
3. Confusion about classification
4. Poor environmental accessibility
5. Point of contact for competitions
6. No feeling of belonging

Thematic Analysis of Free Response

- Poor disability etiquette from able-bodied staff and volunteers
- Lack of “community”
- Limited diversity in community

SOLUTIONS TO BARRIERS

Resources were developed and published to promote equity and support the growing field of adaptive rock climbing. Resources were virtually sent out to all in person contacts from over 20 states, 16 countries, 30 organizations, and 300 adaptive athletes, staff, coaches and volunteers.



Website Includes:

Resources for Gyms

- How to start an Adaptive Program at Your Gym
- Map of Adaptive Climbing Programs
- Adaptive Routesetting
- ADA Accessibility Checklist

Athlete Marketplace

- Handmade items created by athletes

Events Calendar

- Competitions and community events

History of Paraclimbing

- Timeline of paraclimbing

Resources for Athletes

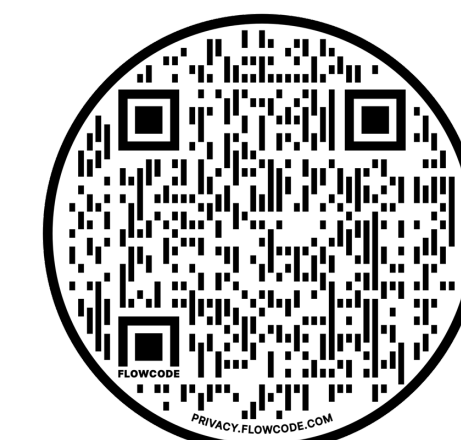
- International list of grants
- Adaptive Equipment for Competitions
- IFSC Classification: Who can compete, Classifiers Explained, Sport Classes, Sport Class Status, Appeals/ Protests

Community Blog

- Stories from community members

Athlete Spotlight

- Athlete shares their unique story



References



Website

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Accessible Climbing Gym Checklist

External Environment	Internal Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> ADA Parking Spaces close to the entrance	<input type="checkbox"/> In-laid, firm crash pads or rigid path to ease mobility with a wheelchair or assistive device to manage catheter
<input type="checkbox"/> 10 foot wide entry door free of turnstiles or barriers	<input type="checkbox"/> ADA bathroom, sanitary location to manage catheter
<input type="checkbox"/> 1:12 slope on ramp (or less)	<input type="checkbox"/> Variety of routes: overhanging, half-overhanging, vertical, with/without features
<input type="checkbox"/> Railings on all ramps and stairs	<input type="checkbox"/> 1:12 slope on ramp (or less)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Railings on all ramps and stairs
	<input type="checkbox"/> Weighted bags at belay stations to account for climber's weight difference
	<input type="checkbox"/> Access to fitness equipment while seated (pull-up bar, hangboard, etc.)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear floor space, especially in fitness areas
	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearance for wheelchair or mobility aid between all fitness equipment
	<input type="checkbox"/> Single story, or elevator/lift access to all climbing and fitness areas

Additional Considerations for Inclusivity

- Feminine hygiene products in all bathrooms
- Use of braille

Key: ADA: Americans for Disability Act

References

United States Access Board. (2020). ADA standards. <https://www.access-board.gov/ada/>

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IFSC Paraclimbing Classifiers Explained

LICENSED HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS
Including but not limited to:
*Ophthalmologist (MD)
*Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD)
*Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)
*Physician (MD) often Physiatrist (FMRK)

CERTIFIED
All classifiers have undergone extensive classroom training, received supervised training, and are internationally certified through the IFSC and are required to maintain competencies and complete re-certification.

VOLUNTEER

Classifiers volunteer their time and resources at events

ROCK CLIMBING EXPERIENCE

Classifiers are climbers too!

IMPARTIAL
Classifiers excuse themselves from conflicts of interest to ensure equity

PANEL

*There are at least two panels of classifiers.
*Each panel has two certified classifiers.

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How to Start an Adaptive Program at Your Gym

Alt Text: A human hand and a robotic hand, meeting in the middle and touching knuckles.

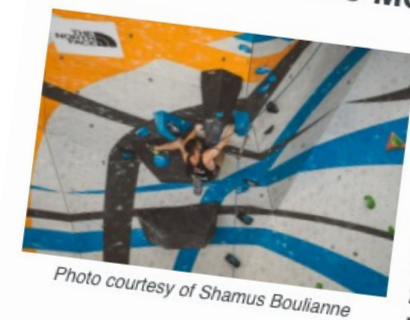
IFSC Classification Explained

Alt Text: The pink and blue logo of the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC)

Grants for Adaptive Athletes

Alt Text: An image showing a financial checklist on a clipboard, with a calculator, pen, and coffee cup

April Athlete of the Month: Shamus Boulianne



"I was born with ectrodactyly which has left me with only two disarticulated fingers on my right hand. For many years of my life this was something that I simply dealt with but never gave much thought to. That is until I began climbing in May 2019 after a friend introduced me to the local bouldering gym.

That first session kicked my butt-

That first session kicked my butt, yet I knew that I had to come back. I spent that first week projecting a black slopy V2 that caught my attention for its big holds my body and trust the friction of my skin and topped out to a feeling of utter euphoria. I was hooked.

Over time I began to recognize regular faces at the gym and started making friends. I progressed quickly and became a recognized face in this community that I had stumbled upon.

I started to recognize my disability as a gift that meant I could stand out amongst the crowd. People told me that I had a unique style and that they loved to watch me climb. This motivated me to push harder, to climb more, and to start posting send videos on Instagram.

Eventually, my videos caught the attention of some prominent names in the world of Paraclimbing and they introduced me to the idea of competing. I decided to try it out and was blown away by the kind and supportive community that I discovered.

Even without the amazing community that climbing has brought me into I would still love the sport for the personal satisfaction that it provides.



Photo courtesy of Shamus Boulianne

When I'm climbing it's just me and the wall.

When I'm climbing it's just me and the wall. It doesn't matter if someone else can use a hold or do a move that I can't. It's about if I can do a move that I couldn't before, or if I can figure out a sequence that works for my abilities. I would tell anyone who's afraid to try climbing because they think you need ten fingers and four working limbs that you'd be surprised, there are lots of ways to get to the top of a rock or a wall."

-Shamus Boulianne

Website:



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