



a proud part of  **USA
CLIMBING**

ORGANIZER HANDBOOK

ABS SEASON 8

USA Climbing: American Bouldering Series
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**ABS Season 8
Organizer Handbook**

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I. Introduction

September 2006

Welcome to the 8th Season of the American Bouldering Series (ABS)! We are pleased to have you involved this year and are looking forward to a great season.

As many of you know, the ABS merged with USA Climbing as of January 1, 2005 and acts as the bouldering arm of the entire USA Climbing organization by organizing and sanctioning all bouldering competitions for all ages and abilities.

The intent of this Organizer Handbook is to help you, the Organizer create and facilitate a safe, fun and successful event. In addition, the ABS should be used as a resource as little or as much as you want for your competition. Some gyms have been hosting ABS comps for going on 8 years and operate like a well-oiled machine, but others will host their first ABS comp this season and will inevitably have many questions. We in the office are here to help with everything from scorecards and membership registration to setting tips and additional promotional ideas.

Please read through this book carefully, as changes have occurred since last season and contact the ABS should you have any questions.

Mission

The mission of USA Climbing (ABS, Sport Climbing Series, USAC Exhibition) is to promote and encourage climbers of all ages in competitive climbing, and to sanction, organize and promote competitive climbing events in an atmosphere of camaraderie and respect, utilizing the support of climbers, parents, coaches, and industry. To achieve that goal, USA Climbing organizes the largest tour of competitive climbing events in the world, sponsor the United States National Adult and Youth Climbing Teams, and promote the interests of climbing both in the United States and abroad. USA Climbing is run and supported by three paid staff and an extensive and committed network of volunteers who work to make this vision a reality.

II. ABS Season 8 Details

Categories of Competitors

ABS competitions are for all ages and abilities. At each comp, competitors will be categorized by age and gender and some will be further categorized by division.

There are two tracks within ABS:

- the Youth track, for those competitors born in 1988 or later
- the Adult track, for those born in 1991 or earlier

2006 Youth categories are as follows: Junior (born in 1988 or 1989), Youth A (born in 1990 or 1991), Youth B (born in 1992 or 1993), Youth C (born in 1994 or 1995), and Youth D (born in 1996 or later). As the season unfolds, Youth climbers advance through Regional Championship events and culminate in a National Championship event. Youth category climbers have an opportunity to be selected to the United States Youth Bouldering Teams based on their performance at the National Championship events.

Adults are offered the following categories of competition:

- Recreational, Intermediate, Advanced, and Open (Open to all competitors born in 1991 or earlier)
- Masters (born in 1967 or earlier)

These categories are supported at all Local and post-season events, culminating at the 2006 ABS National Championships. Age category Recreational, Intermediate, Advanced, and Open category adults, along with any competitor meeting the minimum age requirements of turning 16 in 2007 (born in 1991) can compete in the ABS Adult National Championship event to be held in February of 2007. This event will determine rank for the U.S. Adult Bouldering Team selection.

For those competitors who register to compete in either Recreational, Intermediate or Advanced, please know that you may attempt any problem at the competitions for your top 5 problems. If, however, you complete 3 or more problems in the category above the one in which you registered (or 1 problem in two divisions above your registered category) you will be automatically bumped to the next category.

Competitors born between 1988 and 1991 have the option of competing in either their respective Youth Category and/or the Recreational, Intermediate, Advanced, or Open Category.

Rules

Please see the 2006-2007 USA Climbing: ABS Rule Book: Bouldering Focus for all rules. This Organizer

Handbook will not cover details in regards to rules.

Membership and Results Remittance

To streamline the registration process at your event, please encourage your competitors to sign up as ABS Members on-line. We will also include all of the forms and information you'll need to sign up ABS Members at your comp.

ABS Membership is required for all competitors. Competitors have the following options for membership:

- ABS Limited Membership (Bouldering Only): \$20.00
- Sport Climbing Series (SCS) Limited Membership (Difficulty and Speed Only): \$45.00
- Complete USA Climbing (ABS and SCS) Annual Membership (Bouldering and Difficulty/Speed): \$65.00
- USA Climbing (ABS or SCS) One Day Membership: \$5.00
- USA Climbing Supporter Membership (Non-competing Coach or Supporter): \$35.00

*All competitors at ABS Regional and National Championships must minimally be ABS Limited Members.

When competitors sign up for Membership at your competition, it is easiest for them to write you one check including both the membership and comp fees and then, at the end of the comp, tally the number of people who signed up and cut one check from the host gym to the ABS for membership fees.

Once you have collected all membership forms and fees and written one check to the ABS, place these items in the self-addressed, self-stamped Priority Mail envelope provided in your comp box. Additionally, once you have finished processing results, please email these to abs@usaclimbing.org and print a hard copy to include in the Priority Mail envelope.

Membership will be entered and Results posted within 4 workdays after receiving the Priority Mail envelope.

ABS Season 8 Structure

There are 150 local events held from September 30th, 2006 through March 26th, 2007. There are 10 Youth ABS Regional Championships and 10 Citizens' and Adult ABS Regional Championships held on January 13th and January, 20th, 2007. Both the Youth ABS National Championship and the Citizens and Adult ABS National Championship will be held at two Earth Treks facilities on February 16th – 18th, 2007.

Please refer to the Rule Book for all qualification processes and requirements for the Regional and National Championships.

2007 Youth and Adult US Bouldering Teams

The 2007 Youth US Bouldering Team will be selected at the 2007 Youth ABS National Championship and will be comprised of the top 4 finishers per category/gender. The 2007 Adult US Bouldering Team will be selected at the 2007 Adult ABS National Championship and will be comprised of the top 3 men and top 3 women from the Open Category. (Please see Rule Book for further explanation.)

The team members on the 2007 Adult US Bouldering Team will have first priority to attend all Bouldering World Cups in 2007, will receive a US Team Uniform and will also be eligible for travel stipends provided by USA Climbing: ABS.

The Comp Box

Every year, the ABS provides host gyms with a competition box filled with product from our sponsors and every year, it looks a little bit better. This year is no exception. From backpacks to tees to holds to headlamps, these boxes have a little bit of everything.

Contents of the box vary between Local, Regional and National competitions.

There is a Prize List included in your host pack and another will be in your comp box.

All of the sponsors that have contributed to this comp box, have contributed to the entire season, so we ask that you **please do NOT contact these sponsors for additional product**. Thank you.

All comp boxes will arrive at your gym approximately 2 weeks prior to your event (except those in early

October). If it is late or there are items missing, please contact the office at abs@usaclimbing.org.

Frequently Asked Host Questions

Does the ABS have a required format?

For Local competitions, we have a suggested, but not required, format. If possible, we do ask that you use the suggested format, as it makes results remittance and processing much easier. Regional and National Championships do have required formats.

Does the ABS require that you close the gym?

Again, for Local competitions, if your facility can run a comp while simultaneously being open for regular business then we don't expect you to shut down. Host gyms for Regional and National Championships will be required to close the day(s) of the comp.

Does the ABS require that the comp be held on a weekend?

No. An increasing number of events each season are held on weeknights, keeping their gyms open for weekend revenue. While weeknights might keep the travelers away, it's good for you local clientele. On the other hand, weekend comps have proven very successful and lucrative.

What is ABS' stance on prizes in the comp box?

In the comp box, there are two custom trophies made by eGrips for the top male and female finisher. Additionally, gyms have the option to pass out ribbons as well (contact the office for ordering information) for placement. We ask that you use the prizes for raffle purposes only. We are realistic that we cannot regulate activity at every competition, but we do ask that you follow these guidelines. Otherwise, handing out prizes for placement at the competition tends to favor the best climbers and some of those folks who put in more time and effort but simply don't achieve the same results will feel like they are receiving unfair treatment.

III. Competition Formats

Redpoint Format

Local Competitions, Citizens' Competitions at the Regional and National Championships, and the Youth Regional Championships will be redpoint formats.

All competitors climb at the same time and are allowed to observe other climbers prior to their attempts. Competitors may also discuss the problems amongst each other. Competitors must start the problem from the start holds (in other words, competitors may not work on a problem from the middle). Competitors witness each other climb and when a competitor completes a problem, s/he has two witnesses initial his/her scorecard. Competitors choose which and how many of the problems they will attempt, and they get as many attempts as time permits.

Each gym should set a minimum of 40 and a maximum of 60 problems for every redpoint format competition. These should be divided into Recreational (V0 – V2-), Intermediate (V2 – V4-), Advanced (V4 – V6), and Open (V7+) as guidelines for all competitors.

Youth Regional Championships will be redpoint formats but will have route judges instead of having peer-judges.

On-sight Format

ABS Regional Championship Finals, Youth ABS National Championship Qualifiers and Finals, and Adult ABS National Championship Qualifiers and Finals are on-sight formats. (At the discretion of the RC, Head setter and in conjunction with the Host Gym, Youth Regional Championships may be conducted in an on-sight format if time and facility allow.)

Competitors are placed in isolation and are brought out one at a time to climb each problem in a pre-determined amount of time. Each hold on each problem is allotted a certain number of points and the competitor is scored by a route judge by how high s/he gets on the problem.

Each gym should set a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 problems per category for every on-sight format.

The difficulty of these will vary, dependant upon the competitor field. Typically, the problems will start at V5 and some will be as hard as V12.

V. Organizer Tips

Goals, Finances and Prizes

Before anything else, ask yourself, “why hold a bouldering comp”? To promote the gym? To excite regulars? To get a gym full of new problems? No doubt there’s a mix of influences – collectively they dictate what direction to head in, which helps you understand which aspects of the event need more attention.

Talking with gym owners, it’s often cited that “comps never make money”. While that can be the case, it doesn’t have to be. Effective planning can go a long way to creating cost-effective events.

So, decide what kind of event you want to hold. Will it be a big weekend event where folks travel? Is it a weeknight locals-only type of comp? Both can yield great results, yet both can be botched by misunderstanding your goals as the organizer.

Do you intend to have a cash purse or prizes? Lots of comps these days only do a door raffle among competitors. It seems like the same people are always winning the stuff, and lots of winners are sponsored already anyway. Maybe the competitors at your event would rather just recognize the winners and give the prizes out randomly. If you feel you really need to give the winners something, maybe you should consider a modest cash purse. Most top winners would prefer some small cash in their pockets instead of product they probably already have.

Planning

In the months prior to your competition, make a guideline of all the items that need to be taken care of in preparation of your competition. You will need to inform your setters of the comp so they will be prepared with setting. Volunteers need to be rounded up to help with scoring and the overall running of the comp. You will need to make sure you have plenty of membership forms, scorecards and pens. If you provide your competitor with food and/or drinks, you will need to set those up. Check the ABS website for any updates on scoring items or other pertinent information. If you choose to do extra publicity in local papers or venues, get the word out early.

Publicity and Promotion

Effective publicity can take time to organize, but is worth the effort if taken seriously. There are two main directions to focus on – publicity to increase attendance and publicity to promote the gym.

To draw competitors, send fliers to all area gyms and shops (with week-before follow-up calls), and hype the event to your own regular members. Stress how much fun it will be, and how it is open to all ages and abilities, not just the experts. You might also send fliers to area schools and youth groups you know exist. Don’t underestimate how far someone might travel to come to your comp – send fliers out to a radius of a half-day drive. Additionally, be sure to use the **Administration feature** on www.usaclimbing.org (call the office if you have difficulty accessing this feature) to post as much information as you want to entice people even more!

To promote the gym, mail, fax or email press releases out to area radio stations, TV stations, newspapers and magazines in the area. Make sure you give follow-up calls – it can make a difference between a listing on the calendar and a full-page photo and article. Most of these media groups are interested in stories on different and exciting activities for their listeners/readers. Climbing comps are great community interest stories, especially if there is a large local youth following. Use your comp to show the community what your gym has to offer.

Extra Sponsorship

ABS provides a comp box full of product provided by sponsors to help add value to your comp. Many host gyms have found it valuable to also pursue potential local sponsors and/or other industry sponsors that do not already support the ABS.

Start by sending letters and promotional flyers to brewpubs, local outdoor stores and the like to see who might be interested. Many businesses receive a great deal of solicitation, so make sure you call those companies from whom you do not receive immediate responses. In addition, taking the time to call lets them know that you are truly interested in helping promote their business. Getting local companies involved will

foster community and possibly provide new customers for your gym.

Always remember that sponsors are sending stuff to the event in exchange for the publicity they receive from you. Sponsors often send promotional items to display and hand out at the event – banners, stickers, samples, brochures, etc. Put them up in a visible place without impeding the climbing but where they will certainly get noticed.

Staffing

Volunteers, setters and judges are imperative for the success of your comp. For all three, make sure you treat them well through incentives such as a free-day pass if they are not already a member/employee of your gym or feed them dinner the night of the comp.

The number of staff you will need for your event depends on the size of your comp. Red-point format comps where competitors' judge themselves will clearly not need as many staff as the bigger, on-sight format comps.

Risk Management

All gyms have their own insurance regulations and policies concerning risk management and this section is not to be viewed in lieu of policies currently in place for your facility. These are merely suggestions to help make your competition as safe as possible.

Bouldering areas should be well padded.

Encourage proper spotting – if possible, have a few volunteers that are dedicated to this for the entire comp.

Bouldering areas should be free of obstacles.

Set easy down climbs for problems.

Use back-up screws to prevent spinning holds.

Boulder problems should not exceed a height where the competitor's feet are more than 9 feet off the ground.

Qualified medical personnel and a complete first aid kit (plenty of ice too) should be present.

Starting the Comp

Sign-in areas should be well equipped and staffed so as to minimize the time spent during sign-in.

Competitors want to get in, warm up and look at the problems (if applicable). Please keep a tally on the sheet provided in your comp box of competitors who are already ABS members, those who sign up for the day membership only, and those who sign up for one of the more complete memberships.

About 15 minutes prior to the official start of the comp, gather all competitors in a way such that they can all hear whoever is delivering the pre-comp talk. Be sure to discuss the following:

- Timeline of the comp – how long to climb and until what time, awards, scoring, food (if applicable)

- The full scoring system

- The scorecard and how to record their attempts and ascents

- How to handle technical incidents, if any

- Where to turn in the scorecard once they are finished

A good "emergency kit" to have ready at the comp contains the following:

- Set of wrenches and drills for spinning/broken holds

- Extra problem-marking materials

- Spare holds (with bolts or screws)

- Short ladder

- Well-stocked first aid kit – tape, ace bandage, ice(!)

Scoring

Included in your host packet is a cd that contains a scorecard template and scoring system spreadsheet.

Scoring is usually done per hold or per problem. Problems scored per hold are usually upper-end on-sight events with judges. Most bouldering comps are scored per problem – only complete ascents earn points.

Using the scorecard template we provided, every competitor will circle his/her gender, age and category (if applicable). S/he will then mark which problems s/he completes in addition to marking falls. When competitors turn in their scorecards, have them circle their top 5 to make the scoring process easier. Once you receive all the scorecards, enter the information into the spreadsheet that is on the cd and the math will be done for you.

Post-Comp

After all scorecards have been turned in, it is a good idea to have some sort of refreshments provided to keep the competitors occupied while you run results. Once you are finished, let everyone know that the award ceremony is beginning after which will be the raffle.

Make sure you thank all the sponsors.

Announce the winners of the categories clearly.

Hold prizes up to see and give a full description.

Toss small items out to the crowd.

***Immediately after the comp, be sure to email results to abs@usaclimbing.org so that we can post the results as soon as possible.**

***The first business day after the comp, be sure to finalize everything that needs to be put in the Priority Mail envelope and send it back to the office (it is self-addressed and stamped).**

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