

Climbing on the road to Tokyo

Black Diamond hosted an enriching panel discussion about the present status and future development of climbing as a sport. Follow our renowned speakers – from a top athlete to representatives of the IFSC – as they discuss topics from the history of climbing to being added as Olympic discipline.

This transcript offers you to recap this fascinating discussion.



Photo: Vincent Places

Speaker

FRANCIS SANZARO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF ROCK & ICE MAGAZINE

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JOHN LEWIS DICUOLLO SENIOR PR ACCOUNT MANAGER BACKBONE MEDIA

With an Introduction from **CHRISTIAN LEHMANN** BRAND MARKETING & PRO SALES
MANAGER EUROPE

As organizer and initiator of this even Black Diamond thanks all contributors involved and especially the speakers for their insights on the topic.

Christian: Welcome, everybody. Good morning everybody. My name is Christian. I work for Black Diamonds since almost 10 years. My responsibility is the Brand Marketing in Europe, and I've worked really closely together with the Austrian federation and also Heiko and his team and Michael. I must say, I was so stoked to see the lead finals and see a super happy event. The theme of this whole World Championships 2018 in Innsbruck is Climb. Come together. Celebrate. And I truly believe so far we did a really great job and I am happy to see so many different people today in this room.

That was our goal to bring to you this opportunity through the World Championships, to bring together a lot of different people from different areas, from athletes, brand, IFSC, federation and media together and use this to share information about our road where we are. Climbing is a growing sport. We can see this in many different areas. We see 600 climbing gyms in Japan, over 600 in US and over 1,000 in Europe. And there is no doubt that climbing is on the road to become a bigger sport. You also see this during this event, I think this event is super unique so far when you look at how it's managed, how the show in the Olympia World with the different three venues and also one greater set. I don't know if one of you had a chance to tap into the television like Eurosport, in the Japanese National Television and the NBC Europe Olympic channel in US, in the National TV in ORF. The comments so far and the feedback was overwhelming.

So the moderator for the ORF in the Austrian Television, he's usually commentating on the ski downhill races like the big events and he was just stoked about everything. "This is better than skiing." So we are definitely on the Road To Tokyo and that's why we're all sitting here. And welcome, everybody again.

I want to quickly explain the format of this whole panel. So we will have here a panel discussion. Moderator, John, he will guide us through the panel. We will start off with a quick overview question and the inspirational part and then we want you to be active and take part in this discussion or in this sharing of information because also you are part of the Road to Tokyo anyways. Photographers, trainers, brands. So that's why we do have this a real live conversation.

And if you have a question, raise your hand then we get back to you. Just one rule. Please let the speakers speak and end their point and then we'll get back to you and after the panel, we invite you to a brunch in our showroom over there and we can have further deeper conversations. With that I want to hand over to John.

John: *I also want to thank everyone for coming out today on behalf of Black Diamond Equipment in particular here the panel folks, having given up time during a really busy, busy week. I'd like to introduce the folks. I'll kind of address the audience as we go forward, so you know when to ask questions or whatnot. We're going to start off with just some quick intros for each of the panel members, and then we're going to start with a very basic question at last, and then we'll start to open it up to the rest of the audience.*

So, first, on my right here is Kolin Powick – Climbing Category Director for Black Diamond. He said he's also been Director of Quality for 11 years for Black Diamond and over 25 years of engineering experience. That would be also with an actual warehouse or industrial center.

Number two, I don't really have to introduce this guy, Adam, but you're here as a representative, professional climber, as an athlete. One of the unique things, besides all the great accomplishments he's had as a climber, is that in competition climbing, he's won both formats: bouldering and sport climbing. No one else has done that.

Three, Francis Sanzaro. He is our media representative today. He comes from Rock & Ice Magazine based in US. Francis has been an editor of Rock & Ice many years now. And climbing 25 years. He's a Ph.D. in Philosophy of Religion.

Next up, Sylvia Verdolini. Sylvia is the sport officer for the IFC, Future Director, and she has a doctorate in Astrophysics.

Next up is Heiko Wilhelm. Many of you know him here. He's the CEO of the Austrian Climbing Federation, a passionate climber for over 20 years, coached the Austrian team in the last decade. Huge congratulations for a great effort. I know there's a lot to go. So we wish you luck in the next few days. No pressure.

And then lastly, we have Jérôme Meyer, Head of the Olympic Coordination for the IFSC. Certainly, we know him as a three-time Sport Climbing World Cup winner, European Champion and four-time French Champion from the past. But he's played a very important role in bringing Climbing to the Olympics in 2020.

So here we are. The theme is On The Road to Tokyo, 2020. I think there's one common thing between us all, not just the panel members, but that's climbing. We're all here because of climbing and we probably all have a different story as to what our involvement is.

So I wanted to start with this as a very general question that everyone could relate to in their own way, and I'll start with Kolin. I'm going to refer to Kolin as KP. He said to me that no one here will know him. I would argue that probably most people here do know him, but we'll go by KP. KP again, Climbing Category Director at Black Diamond. Tell us a little bit, not so much about Black Diamond - I just wanted to reassert that, but tell us a little bit about your love for climbing? What's brought you to the sport and your experience? What's special about climbing for you?

Kolin: I know it's a big question. So just a little background. I started climbing late compared to a lot of these guys. I was in my early 20s when I started climbing from Canada, actually moved out to Calgary, where the mountains are in Canada and instantly fell in love with climbing more, kind of started mountaineering, eventually rock climbing, ice climbing. If you're a rock climber, if you're a climber in Canada, you're an ice climber because there's so much winter. Otherwise, you are doing nothing. This was before gyms existed. Now, of course, you can be a rock climber 12 months a year, which is great. I have a mechanical engineering background and then ended up moving to the United States for more climbing, met my wife, married her, she's a climber. I ended up getting a job at BD [Black Diamond] as Director of Quality for 11 years. A lot of great prominent down there. And then Black Diamond Europe opened, come over here climbing. I have a personal rule when it comes to Europe for work and I always stay in climb every time. So that's awesome. And now I've been in that Category Director for the last six years at Black Diamond. So, started climbing, late, still love climbing. All my friends are climbers. All you guys are climbers. Everything I do revolves around climbing. Very one-dimensional guy. Everything is climbing.

John: Adam, what is your relationship to climbing? What did you love about climbing?

Adam: Well, I'm a very one-dimensional guy as well. I was actually born into a climbing family. Everybody climbed around me and then when I was four or five years old, it was like pretty much natural that everybody around climb. So I would feel really bad if I was the only one around who was not climbing. Maybe by the age of seven or eight, I actually realized that not every single person in the world is a climber and in the meantime, I realized that I was quite good and I got completely hooked. And since then, I've been climbing. I don't really know who I would be if I wasn't a climber. I think it shaped my life more than anything else, and I might have even learned much more during climbing than maybe in school.

John: Francis. Your relationship to this sport of climbing. How did you get into climbing?

Francis: I've been climbing since I was about, like, 13 and I got exposed to the sport when I took a trip to Colorado and I was really young. I'm from the East Coast and I don't come from the climbing family, unfortunately, but I was like a gymnast at the time. And when I started climbing and immediately I was just hooked because one, you could go outside and meet people. And the second, it was just really difficult and I loved the idea of just, like, practicing moves in the difficulty of things. So that was kind of like how I got in. That was my entrance. So many guys I really looked up to when I was young. Like their focus and dedication and just what they could do is just amazing to me. So yeah, there's just some early inspirations. In terms of like gym climbing it's interesting. So I grew up climbing outside, but you know, one of the first gym climbed at had 60-foot lead wall in 1995. So it's huge in the States at that time. It actually ended up burning to the ground, which was really sad. But they had plans to build like 80-foot lead wall.

So my first entrance to gym climbing was with these walls that were terrifying. We would go out and do like really sketchy climbing. But climbing on like an 80-foot lead wall was really, like, terrifying too, as a 14-year-old. It was really, really scary to me. So, like, gym climbing wasn't a safe environment for me. It was actually where I would go and try to get butterflies in my stomach. But anyhow. So, you know, I really have been climbing in gyms and outdoors for at least 25 years. So, I do a lot of ice, like, Kolin, and a lot of Alpine climbing as well, so taught me everything.

John: Sylvia. It's a rough group to follow.

Sylvia: Yeah I've a completely different background. I have a Ph.D. in Astrophysics and my dream was to become a professor. And then at some point climbing helped me because I was completely afraid of height so I could not go out to the mountains. Something that all my family and I loved. And thanks to climbing and to my friends who took me I overcome this fear of height. So for me, it's a challenge and it's how you face the challenge. It is the mental vibe that I love about the sport and I'm thankful to the sport because it really helped me. So I quit my job and I gave up my dream as a researcher, but I found so much more and I had the courage. Thanks also to the sport. So then I started working in Science Communication and then after that, it just happened I was lucky enough, I applied for this position and I'm super happy to be part of this world.

John: Heiko. Your relationship to climbing. How did you come to love this sport?

Heiko: I started climbing very early when I was a kid and it's that time climbing determined my life in all ways and, of course, I could talk long about it, but I would say almost same like Adam says: Climbing taught me so much. All the different people, the community, the sport itself, the traveling. So you get so much inspiration all the time and every journey is a new journey. And that makes it so special and probably in the future we will have a Ph.D. in climbing. I don't know.

John: Lastly, Jérôme, when did you first fall in love with climbing?

Jérôme: Well, I was a kid. Yeah, it's kind of a family story as well. So I started in the mountains and then eventually I moved to the drives and then eventually I moved to the competition were I met Heiko and some of these guys and then it becomes my way, which allowed me, by the way, to go back to the crags and to the mountains when I have a bit of time for this. So climbing is in the back room all the time. And the great thing is that it's not just something super small and it can be as I said, a competitive, it can be just something for your own leisure with high performance or just being in nature. So it is really something that allows you to balance your life between the rest of your activities, work or kids, all that kind of stuff. So, yeah it will help you maintain the balance and super happy about this as well.

John: Thank you. As Christian mentioned earlier, we're talking about the popularity of climbing. We see the wave coming, and it's actually already here. I would imagine, for the most part, many of us here, we're very excited climbing is going to the Olympics in 2020. What we just talked about, our individual experiences, how we relate to this sport. I'm sure there's one for each one of you out there. We feel, you know, with all these stakeholders in town, we felt like it was a good time to have this discussion. So really we're all in this together to shape the future of the sport. And so I want to open this up to the crowd now if we have questions. I'm just going to lead off with the panel here, but if there's anyone in the audience who has questions related to the panel or questions about something they've said, please raise your hand and Christian will help out here with getting your question and an answer to your question.

So really from a brand perspective Kolin, Black Diamond Equipment, what I'd like to know is, you know, how in getting here today to Innsbruck the World Championships and this new influence of climbers with the sport, how has the brand evolved with the growth of climbing through the years?

Kolin: So for those that don't know the history, Black Diamond was formed in 1989 from a company, previously known as Chouinard Equipment. And back in 1989, it was a really small group of guys, mainly guys, some women too. And the goal of the company was to make gear so they could go climbing and it was really that simple, just wanted to make gear so they and their friends can go climbing. And it really turned into a business where we have to make gear to make money so people could support themselves. And ultimately that has never changed from the very beginning. The whole goal is to make gear so that we can go climbing. And as climbing changes, the gear changes and then as gear changes, the climbing changes. So from the beginning, as the sport has evolved, mixed climbing is a great example. When mixed climbing came out, guys were doing stuff with ice tools and crampons on their boots and then we created lighter crampons and different ice tools to allow different things to happen.

And as gym climbing is happening, gym manufacturers – like Walltopia is here – have popped up. The gear has changed the different carabineers for sports climbing, Alpine climbing, making things lighter. So I'd like to think it's one of these things that it beats the other. The gear helps the athletes to push it further and then the athletes who push the gear manufacturers to make the gear better, to allow them to do what they're doing. So it's kind of a tough question to answer, but the foundation of it is or as we like to think - and its Black Diamond for sure, but it's all gear manufacturers - we're trying to help evolve the sports with the athletes and then have the athletes, and athletes don't have to be professional athletes, they are everyone in the building climbing to help us make it so we can take it to the next level.

John: Adam, as a professional athlete, something funny that didn't occur to me that you had such a huge Instagram following, but Christian mentioned the other day some numbers related to your Instagram account. As a professional climber, how has your life changed? You know, on the road - let's say the road to Innsbruck, how has your life changed up to this point as a professional climber?

Adam: So pretty much since I was eight, I was just dedicating myself to the climbing as much as I could. Well, I was still going to school. I even studied at the university, but as soon as I was done with school then my thoughts were in climbing. So that hasn't really changed and the passion for climbing hasn't really changed. The life of professional climbers definitely changed a lot. For example, I haven't had any social media until two years ago. My following has grown quite nicely since then. But I think definitely, the fact that climbing made it to the Olympics, made our sport itself much more seen in the mainstream media. And that has changed. When I walk in my hometown only three years ago nobody could really recognize me. Now it's quite tough. But it's kind of a small price to pay to be able to live the dream and to be supported by the sponsors like Black Diamond to do what I really want. And that's a great thing. And I feel very fortunate to be able to live exactly how I want.

John: We actually met over the phone when I had a New York Times reporter on an interview. I called you during the time you were on the Dawn Wall eating breakfast one morning and introduced you to a New York Times reporter. So that's just the crazy world of climbing. Speaking of media, Francis, now, how has the media changed? Certainly, social media has changed the coverage of competition climbing. It's changed the way we look at the sport. You've been a very integral part of that. Tell us how the media is involved or has evolved with the sport of climbing.

Francis: I mean obviously it's a pretty complicated question. I mean, Rock & Ice we're really agile. We're about, you know, four or five rock climbers just trying to tell stories about the climbing community. Well, what we're seeing right now, especially like the last five years I think your anecdote about on the Dawn Wall, it's really, really interesting because, in the last five years, we started to see climbing stories get picked up at really high levels. Like, New York Times, New Yorker Pieces and things like that. And you know, we're always, kind of like skeptical and like grumbling that. You know, all of a sudden they're coming in like so late in telling these stories and because they haven't been on the beat, you know. But I think that the growth of the sport and especially like gym climbing is what has paved the way for the stories to be told and to make an audience receptive to that.

If there were 100,000 people in the US climbing gyms every day, then the stories really wouldn't be that popular. They wouldn't be well read. And so editors wouldn't assign them on a basic level. Like The Dawn Wall film and many before that were huge successes in the United States. I don't know about their success in Europe. They were huge in the US. Like, people like

my parents, friends and uncles and stuff were telling me, have I seen “Meru”, it's a good climbing movie. And I'm like, “Well, yeah, of course, I have seen it.” But they are watching this stuff. And of course you know, with the media, I think the non-core media will mature and get more sophisticated as they tell those stories. And core media needs to also up their game as well and apply more resources to kind of speaking to a global audience. So I think that's one thing that I know I've seen from our desks as it's going forward.

In terms of like social media, Adam, you've seen it firsthand, you know, like sometimes maybe not the demands that get put on athletes that market themselves, but the way, you know, a lot of stories and a lot of media just literally appears in social media and on social media and that really changes the way print works and that changes the way things fly around the internet and the World and it's going to increase. It has ramifications, I think all the way down just to like the safety level of rock climbing and like people falling off cliffs because they're taking photos on the top of it. There's an even story about like Instagram deaths where people are trying to get the greatest photos and literally are dying. It's really interesting, but – it may not be related to rock climbers – but it's just fascinating to me. I'll stop there. You have to keep going about so we talked about it. But yeah it's changing and it's going to ramp up.

John: Thanks, Francis. Sylvia, your role. I introduced you as the Sports Officer, a future director of the IFSC. In that role I take that you manage a lot of what goes into sport climbing competitions and whatnot, whether it's the rules, the judges, the format. Can you tell us a little about your role there at the IFSC so that the group knows what exactly...

Sylvia: Yes, so my role inside the sport department is to take care of the final product and build whatever the final product that is in our competition. So everything, there is in the background. And so in this, I take care of the technical commissions. I manage all of them, and this includes the rules commission. So making sure we have strong rules and strong background, and then all the officials. And then now because of the time – thanks to the Olympics and the involvement – we have to just keep on improving and to get our foundation stronger and stronger. So in this, I'm also working on sports equipment. That's just making sure that in the field of play we have safe equipment, we have fair field of play and that everything is at the highest stand as possible. And that's why I'm very glad that Black Diamond invited us here because it's good to have this conversation. We do need companies to sponsor us. It's part of our product which is the competition. And then the addition that came on the last years is also, let's show the values and how good the sport is. Because we know it, we are part of the community but in terms of how we present it, it's not always as obvious.

So part of my role is also to show and to present the sport in its core and it's good values and make sure that those come across to the public, even those that turn on TV for the first time, see a competition, and see everything that is in this room and is in the community to make it as obvious as possible and show that it's a good sport. We bring a lot to the IOC. All those values are obvious to us. For many others, it's not. And because I'm the only female here, I'm going to say gender equality in sport climbing competition is obvious and it's there. And in so many other sports it's not there. So that is an added, really added value to the Olympic community.

John: A quick follow-up question for you, Sylvia is I believe, and correct me if I'm wrong, everything is fairly set format wise and whatnot for 2020. Climbing is considered a trial sport, correct? Or am I wrong in saying...

Sylvia: An additional sport.

John: Okay. And so after the Olympics then you would be involved in reviewing everything that happened at Tokyo and make a decision moving forward from there?

Sylvia: I am going to answer but maybe Jérôme who can add to that. We are an additional sport in Tokyo and we're in the sort of trial run and also in October we are participating to the YOG, so the Youths Olympic Games. So we are under the spotlight but we do not have a secure position in Paris 2024 and definitely not in Los Angeles. So now we are really working very hard to show and prove that we are a good added value for them.

John: Great. Heiko, this week - I've just recently got back to town, so I have yet to see the competitions. I'm looking forward to this weekend. - This being your baby, this Championship, World Championships here in Innsbruck. Am I correct to say that?

Heiko: Yeah.

John: I'm sure you've had a lot of help.

Heiko: Well, mainly the federation and definitely I have to say that the head of the organization team is my friend Micheal Schöpf. He's doing a really, really great job and with our team, we've never had them like that. So this is one important information I think.

John: Tell us a little bit about some of the differences, some of the changes or some success stories thus far. I know it's not over, but within Innsbruck, some of the things you're happy with and whatnot.

Heiko: So, of course, the Innsbruck Championship came so successful, that's a lot of work in the past, so there are several steps which happened in Austria and our federation that brought it to that point. Like in just 2005 when the competition federation was founded so that we can focus on competition climbing to performance sport and not inviting money or interest is with other people. That's an important step, the next step is that we get funding's from the government which is really important to run events like that. And having strong and reliable partners, but we benefit here really well. And we started in -- I think it was 2013 - because after 2012 we have been in Paris. Paris was a great show. And we said that's what we would like to have in Innsbruck, but better. And that was the drive, especially for Michael that we started to negotiate with the government, the local government in Innsbruck, the regional government in Tirol and in Vienna. And due to the fact that we have been so early, we got a lot of support by the government also because the government sees climbing in Austria really authentically. They say it fits 100% to Austria. We are living in middle of the mountains. We have nice crags. Everything fits together.

And then when all that had come together, our goal was to sell more aspects and not just organizing a competition, but organizing an event. And the second thing, like our slogan is Climb. Come together. Celebrate. - and that means we all said in advance, climbing is not just climbing on a wall. Climbing is a lot more. That's why we decided to make also a framework program and try to show all the faces of our sport. That was a big risk from our side because we never knew how it will then be recognized by other people, but like at the Market Square it turned out really well.

And so the whole story is really good because having this climbing center in Innsbruck, which is one of the most beautiful obviously or the biggest in Europe, it was necessary to build it, but that it came like that, the way it turned out, that was also part of the World Championships

because it was in our concept. We tried to figure out a concept which delivers us sustainability for the future. Like it's the training facility here, the walls, we have from Walltopia that we will use for the next years for competition. So it was at the end our goal to have benefit in the next 10 years from this competition, but also to take the chance and show all the people, especially those who have no clue about climbing or are not into climbing, how interesting and how attractive our sport is. And as said in advance the director of sport from the national broadcaster he was really surprised about the potential of our sport.

And it's kind of funny because our sport, 25 years ago, there was the first World Championship in Innsbruck, so in 1993. And they broadcasted it as well. It took 25 years to really get into it to show them how beautiful it could be. It was lot of negotiation because having a few hundred thousand euros being invested just for a broadcasting takes a lot of effort and that's why I have to say it again. It is really important to get strong partners because running an event like that needs a lot of money and you also need the trust of your partners because they spend a lot and finally we are really lucky and happy that we get all the positive feedback that they say, "Okay. It was definitely worth it." And that's great.

***Christian:* Any questions from the audience?**

Participant 1: Yeah. Maybe a question for Adam. Just to generalize your personal expectations like getting climbing olympic, a little bit of insights for 2020.

John: Well, we're going to talk about that next. Where we go from here. I really wanted to focus first how we got to this point, Innsbruck. So we will leave your question here for the next round and finish with you Jérôme here right now. Jérôme, tell us a little bit of how the IFSC has evolved through the years to get to this point. And maybe a follow-up question to Sylvia, you know, after Tokyo, who's making that choice?

Jérôme: Yeah, so first of all you need to understand that the IFSC represents the community. If you imagine a triangle on one side is the athletes, the other the brands, the other side there is the IFSC. The IFSC is composed of the national federations and is on the front line. We're representing sport climbing to an international sports movement and eventually the Olympic movement. And in front of that, we represent, but we also do have to answer the expectations of this world. And what we had to do in the past year was really to answer the demands from the media, from the Olympic movements, from the sponsor but at the same time we ensure that we are true in representing the sport climbing. And so it was -- because the IFSC is 10/11 years old now -- so it was a lot of work but it was constant discussion and trying to balance things. So sometimes we had a discussion with our event organizers, with the athletes. I will do this in demo of how we present the sport into the event. Sometime they really compromised, sometime we say, "Okay. No, we stick to what we are." So the IFSC evolution in the past year was valuable. Fine-tuning its products when you think about talking to the rest of the world and at the same time making sure that it truly represents the sport and its athletes and stays true to what we do. Not easy but let's say so far so good.

And this is why we're here to really hear about any important issue. We evolve in the coming years. We're really happy to do this for the future, and from an Olympic perspective basically, there is delivering this two games: The Youth Olympic Games in a month and Tokyo games in two years and then being part of the future games program. So that's the best to challenge, that's definitely the goal. Out of the Olympic perspective, because it should not be the only thing that IFSC is doing, is keeping on making sure that the development of sport climbing on the competition side is sustainable and representing the other part of the community. That sounds like big things but eventually, it's what it is.

John: Thank you. And to the gentleman again. We're going to move on now. Start shifting our focus to hear beyond. So sir, your question for Adam one more time?

Participant 1: The question was on the expectations of getting climbing in the Olympic sports in 2020.

Adam: For the sport in general do you mean?

Participant 1: Just your personal expectations. Maybe also in general. Yeah.

Adam: So I think the fact that climbing made it to the Olympics at least for Tokyo 2020, definitely means indirectly more gyms, more people climbing, more mainstream media coverage. I think all of this is great for the sport. I think the potential disadvantages for the sport could be that our crags could be overcrowded, but if I would really distinguish the gym climbing and climbing outdoors as they are really two different things. I think the number of people coming in the gym in the last 10 years has grown incredibly. Number of people climbing outdoors, not really so much. I wouldn't be really afraid of it. So I really see huge advantages of the Olympics for the climbing in general. I think as gyms started growing bigger and better, it's also much more fun to climb in them. I think 15 years ago you would go into the gym especially to, like, train and get strong for outdoor climbing. Now we can really go into the gym and, like, have proper fun. Like for me personally, it will never ever get as great as climbing outdoors, but it's comparable.

Participant 1: Is there a fear that climbing is changing somehow because I spoke to the Austrian athletes some year ago because now going into the Olympics, that change for a combined format, you have to make boulder, you have to make lead, you have to make speed. So everything changed a little bit. So is there a fear that maybe you have to be more about combining than specializing in something?

Adam: For sure. The fact that climbing is in the Olympics but it's only in the combined format, it shaped the competition climbing a lot. But it will be only in Tokyo. I don't have any idea how it's going to be in the future. My personal opinion is that the best situation is that climbing would go back into three individual disciplines and the combined would maybe exist, but the most important would still be the core three disciplines. In my point of view it's really the best way and really shows the specialists in their own disciplines. I think in the Olympics like this if you introduce one discipline, you should really show the best in their discipline. But I don't want to talk about like I'm not satisfied with the format. I accept the reasons why all of us we decided to go for the combined format. And I hope that it is just the stepping stone for the future and climbing will be included as a proper sport with all three disciplines included.

Christian: Any comment from the panel on that topic?

Jérôme: I can give a bit of background on the combined because I guess that's the question many people have. So we had that discussion with Adam and some other athletes. And to make it very simple, the Olympic movement offered us the possibility to be in the games, but with only one medal. And so consequently the IFSC had two choices: Either one discipline or a combination of disciplines. So we had to make a choice and the rationale for the choice was to go for the combined simply because then we can offer to all our athletes to participate in the game and also to show all the disciplines of the games because any other choice would have

been though. They are not super ideal, any other choice, would have meant the position that we had to exclude some other part of climbing. So that was mainly the rational and for the future, well, we are working on that. First of all, we need to see how things are going for the Youth Olympic Games and in Tokyo and then keep on discussing, showing the value of all the forms. That's just for the context.

Francis: Yeah. The Olympic committee wants to give only one medal because of its qualification as an additional sport, you know, why one medal? I don't know. I'm curious like why not three? Like it doesn't seem like it would...

Jérôme: Basically, the games are quite packed. And simply since there is some limit at some point, things are super huge. At some point, there's a crack in terms of number of athletes, number of events. The number events is basically number of medals. And they wanted to fit it into the existing program. Some new sports, five of them, actually. Which means that you have to push the wall and that's why they went on to an option that meant, "Let's have these sports so they can be present, but unfortunately we have this little space for that."

So we have been entered into the program as an additional sport because that was the process imagined by the IOC at that time. Now and I want to make it very, very clear, we are treated as an olympic sport. So in my discussion with the Olympic committee, in my discussion with the organizing committee when the IOC comes to our athletes, we are definitely at the same level of the Olympic sports and so there's no two classes of sport and that makes a big difference. But we're only for Tokyo. So we'll have to gain again our place for the next games.

Christian: There was one question from in the back.

Matt Groom (Epic TV): Yeah. With climbing becoming an Olympic sport adding more a focus on indoor and gym climbing there is inevitably going to be a disconnect between that and outdoor? And looking at the people at the stage, Adam who is known for his outdoor sport, Black Diamond who is subtle about outdoor equipment, as organizations, are you concerned about that disconnect? Is it something you are going to look at addressing because the IFSC is obviously focused very much on the sports aspect of it in terms of the competition? Do you have an eye for the other half of the sport and not just the competitions of it?

Jérôme: Okay. So I start and then my colleague. Very quickly as I said earlier, we imagine that triangle and for me this kind of events are great for that. From me, we really need to create the lines between the triangle and create that territory inside the triangle. That has not always been the case, but now, given that there is these changes that are upcoming and changing for good because it's bringing more people, more resources to the sport, we really need to be even tighter and working together. So the IFSC is aware of this and there is a view initiative on the planning equipment that IFSC started.

Personally, on my Olympic aspect I really want to engage the brand and the athlete into the future candidature. Otherwise there's no point. I mean, it cannot be just the IFSC doing this on its own, but this will require from my perspective a bit of talks, some meetings that give some more insights.

John: The follow up on what Matt said and direct to Kolin here. Kolin, you mentioned at the beginning the history of Black Diamond as a brand here. And you said we make gear for ourself. Doing PR for you guys, there's a lot more gear out today than there ever has been and certainly directed towards this new category gym climbing. Can you tell us a little bit about that? Like what the brand's doing?

Kolin: Yeah, I mean like I said a little bit earlier, I don't want to repeat myself, but maybe I will: We were founded on big wall climbing and then as the sports have evolved, we've continued to provide equipment for these other disciplines of sports from Via Ferrata, to sport climbing, to gym climbing, but we still are not going to forget the heritage where we came from because as long as there is wall climbers and guys like Adam trying to free the Dawn Wall and Tommy [Caldwell] and those guys, we need to make this gear to allow the athletes to do that.

So to your point back to your question. Yes. As a gear manufacturer, we do need to be aware of what's going on all over the world and we want to provide the right equipment so these guys can win gold medals at the Olympics, but we are still going to maintain the trad gear and the ice gear and the mountaineering gear and the alpine climbing gear for sure.

Adam: I don't think that it's necessarily a bad thing that competition and outdoor climbing will be disconnected. Because there are these fears that maybe the Olympic mass might somehow change the competition climbing for worse. I don't really think so, but yes, maybe some say like the parallel of the snowboarding that the Olympic really didn't make any good for the sport itself. So if we really see the competition climbing and outdoor climbing as disconnected, there is no danger that outdoor climbing could go for worse. I don't believe that people will stop climbing outdoors. No, not at all. It's going to be still great sport in 10, 20, 30 years with more gyms. I think even the core outdoor climbers will still keep going to the gym because it's a great training and then it's everybody's choice if you want to go outdoors or not.

What we definitely need to take care of is that the diversity of our sport will be maintained. So not every single climbing area will be bolted like if it's in the gym. And I think that development is definitely going in the right way. I think we can't say the trad climbing and big wall climbing gets down. I would say it's even growing and it's really important. And I'm really optimistic about that diversity of climbing will be maintained.

John: I see Ralph do you have a question?

Ralph Stöhr (Kletter Magazine, DE): Yes. I just have a quick comment to that all to the disconnection of indoor and outdoor climbing. I think if you look at the first three in the lead Championship is Adam, Jakob [Schubert] and Alex [Megos] and they have all climbed 9b outside. So at the moment I find it very impressive as the top of the competition world is also the top of the outdoor world. So we see the best climbers indoor and outdoor at the same time at the moment.

Adam: I think it's a big danger on let's say the national levels. There are many coaches that in the end, they think that outdoor climbing is even harmful for the competition. On the short term right before the competitions, it might be. On the long-term it's very beneficial, but some coaches don't understand it at all. And I think there is a danger that there is going to be more and more people like that. That climbing is about climbing in the end and no matter if it is gym or outdoor.

Ralph Stöhr (Kletter Magazine, DE): To Heiko and Adam maybe, in terms of professionalism of the organization. And the showing of the event this World Championship what we can expect for Olympia is that the level already, you know, or will Olympia will be even better organized.

Heiko: Probably, this is more a question to Jérôme because you're on it. But I would like to say I think this event we created here is a really good benchmark, and I'm sure we have so

many things which run in almost perfect. Nothing is perfect but it involved people who have not been into climbing. And I think for 2020 we might have the chance in once of a lifetime chance to become Olympic in 2024 and of course, we have to do our best to show our sport from its best. But therefore, I see two sensitive situations. One is that we have to do everything for our sport to become sustainable in the Olympic family, but on the other hand we have to take care because doing everything for the Olympic could be in conflict with that. And this is, I think, a small ridge we have to go and meet every minute and look on all sides. So this is what I see. But I guess if we show what we tried to create here, it could be a good benchmark for 2020.

Jérôme: Quickly, the complexity of the games is not necessarily running the sport event on their own. So all the sports at the same time, the size of the venue, and the size of the people attending, the media and all these things. So eventually, this is why sometimes it looks like it's more organized and you know, sometimes you feel something is not organized because the shuttle is not stopping on time but you cannot compare. So what we will need to compare, it's really the whole sport. So, like really the moments of when the climbers are climbing. And for me, we need to look at the same level. Today with what we have developed because what is crazy and what I really love about us is that we are in order every day I'm sure that if Austria Climbing would organize the World Championship in two years, we would have new ideas and resolutions. So Tokyo might be better just because we will evolve. But in terms of benchmark we have the maximum of what we can do today and if the Olympics were tomorrow morning we would have the same potential. That's my point of view at least.

Piotr Turkot (www.wspinanie.pl, PL): One question about the Olympics. Because now with Tokyo we know the format is stable, one medal, but if in Paris will be the same, that we will get one medal. The community will accept again, the same problem with the one medal and the combined format? Adam, it will be a problem for you? Because Tokyo will be a great adventure for everybody but if it is in Paris the same?

Adam: I don't know. I haven't really considered that so much even though I know that there is a pretty good chance that it will be, again, an additional support in Paris. Honestly, I don't really know if the better decision would be to combine or pick up one discipline. I don't know. I think picking up one discipline potentially could be if we really want to showcase the most dramatic and fantastic competition in the Olympics, which will be the most - the easiest to explain to the mass audience that I think they could pick one discipline only. And in my point of view, it's lead. It's kind of like higher chance of a great success. That's my point of view. But that's about discussion.

John: I see Anni over here as a question.

Ani Manova (Walltopia): Yeah. Ani from the Marketing Team of Walltopia. I just wanted to reference the very basic question about this connection of indoors and outdoors. As a wall manufacturer, we're seeing rapid growth over the last five years. There's so many gyms popping worldwide, which is awesome for us obviously and that format of the World Championships and the climbing going to Olympics definitely brings a lot more attention to our sport worldwide, to the general public. I actually think that the disconnection is healthy because that rapid growth brings a lot more new people that are not experienced in climbing into our sport and as we all know, our climbing brings inherent risks that not everybody's willing to take. If we see that rapid growth at ones on the outdoor crags, like, I can't imagine what kind of mess is going to happen. So I think that this disconnection that's happening is kind of healthy. I mean it definitely brings a lot more understanding to climbing and outdoor climbing to the general public. Having Tokyo

2020, having such a broadcast of the World Championships, but we don't want to see that rapid growth in outdoor climbing. I think so.

John: Brendan.

Brandon Pullan (Gripped Magazine, CA): Sylvia, we talked earlier about the sport presentation and having that emotional connection between the athlete and what's happening on stage and the audience. Can you talk a bit about how it's come to here from 15 years ago when it was like, "So and so from this country," and go - to, "Okay, this is so and so from this country. They have a two-year-old son that was just born and we should love them" and are emotionally connected to them almost right away. Where is that going to go in the future?

Sylvia: Yeah. So, it's a mix of things. So one part is to show that emotion and the other side is also to show that emotion to people not known in the sport. So it's giving an understanding and showing the values of our sport to someone that is just starting to watch a competition and the work we're doing. And this is thanks to our event organizers, the national federation is really into working together to try to look at the competition from someone that has never seen it. And so trying to create the storyline. There's a mix of an understanding of what is happening and also add that emotional moment. As we were saying earlier, in paraclimbing events, that's an item that's taken for granted because there is that connection with the coach and there is that immediate emotional moment. But that does not mean that in all of our disciplines it is not present. It's there. It is just a little bit more hidden. So, here they've done already a really great work as in after the lead competition: We saw a shot of the coaches and their excitement. That might seem a minor thing, but that helps the audience to connect and to get that emotion and understanding of also the level of the athleticism that they're showing at the events.

Then on top of this we're really working on, for instance, showing the verticality and the overhanging when we talk about lead and bouldering especially. In speed it is the effort and the speed. So it's something that you really have to work from all the technical perspective in order to show that because if you place a camera in front, you know more than me – on what tiny holds they can hold onto. And so we are really trying to get the feel of the sport into someone that has never seen it before.

Kevin Corrigan (Climbing Magazine, USA): I'm curious, either of the IFSC members, since the sport has already been starting to get presented to a mainstream audience more this year: Like in the States it's on the Olympic channel overall cup season if you have any preliminary data about which disciplines are resonating the most with the mainstream audience.

Sylvia: No, the only -- but this is not a very updated figure, but out of our YouTube viewers, we didn't use the one most viewed. I wouldn't be ready to speculate onto why and how did that happen, but definitely, we didn't use -- this year's season and after the World Championship would be really good to look at those figures as it might change.

John: I want to take the question out to Francis. Along these lines, I know you've had your hands up, but listen to the media and there's several media members here in the room, you know, representing Germany and the US, Canada, whatnot, but regarding the media, in your experience, you know, moving forward, what are some of the things that you'll be doing to attract this new audience or speak with this new audience and beyond into the Olympics? And I wanted to reference you have a new product coming forward that I think it's worth doing that.

Francis: Sure. Yeah. We just launched a magazine called Gym Climber, and you know, we've had this conversation for about a couple of years now in the office. We've seen the Olympics coming like cut and pasted the python, right? You know this giant thing coming, you know, it's on its way. And so, I think the sport is at a tipping point where the culture and the characters and the circuit really deserve its own storytelling. I think that kind of mainstream, you know, climbing media and even a lot of core media don't really do justice to the complexity and really the athletes climbing on plastic and do a competition. I mean, it's not that like what we are going to try to do with Gym Climber is create this new thing. We're just trying to really reflect what's already happening. And it's brilliant. And you know, when you see a lot of like Olympic storytelling on NBC or the channel that you watch here in Europe, you know, it tends to be about like the dedication single pursuit of the athletes in the Olympic dream and all this stuff. The interesting thing about climbing and telling the story of the Olympics is that it's already there. Climbers are super dedicated. Guys like Adam are already out there, like you said, since you were seven or something, right? I mean, like, we've got the stuff that can tell Olympic stories and basically, I mean, the stuff is there and so I think what our new magazine's trying to do is just literally bring that to light and show what's going on to this huge new crowd that is out there.

And just one point regarding the gap, which I think reflects it is what's interesting is that most of the time you see indoor climbers identify with the outdoor experience, even though they may not do it. Like, for instance, in the gym we have here a picture of Adam climbing outdoors and most of the people that see that may not climb outdoors. Right? And so it's like when you see a coke commercial, someone drinking coke during a basketball game. That's disgusting. And nobody really does that. But they're selling the lifestyle, right? There is a disconnection in the lifestyle and the product, and I think gym climbers, especially in the States, they really identify with outdoor climbers. They all know who Alex [Honnold] is, but they have no idea who the national champion is or they know who Adam is, but they have no idea who is the bouldering champion. And so you're going to have this huge crowd that's inside but they don't identify with that. They identify with the outdoors. There's a lot of reasons for that. But it's interesting regarding the gap.

Heiko: I'd like to add a comment to the question before. Over the last week I was in the van of our footage producer of our national broadcaster. And it was quite interesting to see how they work. So far bouldering did that happen yet, but I'm kind of afraid of the semi-finals today because it's really hard to capture because it's quite busy at the wall. For the finals I think it will work better. As you always see, the highest risk we have on the perfect show is route setting and this could bring the event to a perfect show or could crush it a little. I'm really curious how it will work over the next few days. The director of the broadcaster is really into Formula1, Champions league in football, ski racing and biathlon for Olympics, so he has a lot of experience. It was quite interesting for me because, for him, he's interested in so much different captures than I do. Because for me, the best is seeing how the climber moves, but for them, they need the close ups. They need the angles and all this stuff which is really important. So that's why I'm 100% sure that only seeing it from the eye of a climber would not give us the benefit we need to have a perfect product. And the feedback so far is that he said, the lead product is almost perfect and he's a professional. It's almost perfect itself because it's really interesting. You have so great people with good stories. The sport is stunning. The atmosphere is great and it takes less than 60 minutes. That's what all the channels ask for. And that's the risk you have in bouldering that it could extend longer. Just from perspective of a broadcaster. And in speed, they said it's great. It was perfect when you watched it on Eurosport. The commentator, he's a legend in Germany – Sigi Heinrich – and he was also fascinated. But he also said - maybe it could be boring after awhile because it's always the same, so maybe it

needs to change the route. This was said by a professional and sports commentator and so that could bring someone...

John: Did he not say that it was better than the skiing?

Heiko: The national broadcaster, one of those said yes but I don't know what the guy in Eurosport said but he was really fascinated by this sport.

John: I know Matt had a question earlier. I don't know if it still relates.

Matt Groom (Epic TV): Kind of yes. It's really interesting hearing you talk about the mainstream audience and I think it's something that everyone does really well at the moment. I was wondering if there is a danger in oversimplifying the sport and having people turn the TV on and thinking they immediately get it because there is so many complicated sports like Formula1, or curling for example which doesn't make any sense but people are willing to invest the time to learn it and I wonder as of as much as trying to appeal to everyone there is a danger of going too far and oversimplifying the sport?

Heiko: In my personal opinion our sport is not really complicated. I would say especially in lead, the higher the better. And we did this animation with showing the virtual high point. So I think this is quite simple. It came from the sailing and from the ski jumping with a virtual line. So they hired Swiss Timing to develop this. And for bouldering, it could be a little bit more complicated. So we developed also a tool which gives predictions, what is needed to be at the podium and what needed to win. For a non-climbing audience, it could be not that easy to understand, but is that the most important to understand all the details or to just follow the show and be impressed by what's going on? Of course, at the end, you need to know, who wins, but I think small elements in the presentation of our sport will help to outline it in a good way.

Adam: I would like to go back to the route setting and the routes that yes, we should definitely consider to make the sport even more breathtaking and interesting and maybe shorter but at the same time stick to the values and the cores. So, definitely like in terms of lead, making it too much kind of like a speed climbing competition or in my point of view reducing the climbing time in the finals four to six minutes for certain walls is definitely a bad idea because you can't really make a route which is hard and which will let you climb in your own style within six minutes because some of the walls are just simply too high. And in my point of view, that's just kind of a point where it's just thinking that you have to make it short in order to make it dramatic and in the end you only just kill the drama because just watching somebody fall all of a sudden just climbing as fast as possible and just messing up and falling off too early is not nice to watch.

John: This gentleman here had a question.

Participant 2: This is just in relation to the package and how you were discussing this latest obviously hazel of trying to fit it into 60 minutes and everything like this, and this may be a little bit towards Jérôme and Sylvia because you understand where the sport is going from the eye of the IFSC, especially with the Olympics. Are you looking at having the event separated so men and women will be climbing at different times, as complete different packages at the Youth Olympics and the Olympics or will you be going back to back? Because obviously with boulder finals this year, we've seen the separation of men and woman and it makes for a very long final which might not be appealing for a viewer.

Jérôme: That is a question about the schedule. So first of all the schedule as it has been here at the World Championships, or the World Cup or for the Olympic Games is because of different rationals and different perspectives. So far the plan that we are going to have in the Games, is to have space for the men and space for the women. So in order to make sure that the competition does not get super long and the broadcaster can pick the sessions of the event from the federation. This is for the games. For the rest of the event the discussion is always open I mean when we talk about schedule we talk with the event organizer – will we do it that way or that way so there is nothing super set indefinitely.

Sylvia: Just to add a little bit on both points also what Matt said earlier: I never mentioned simplifying. So it's just taking the sport and explain it in a simple way. But we're not changing the rules. We do not want to change the sport and what it represents, but one change we had this year, we had to split finals and that's because if you have Adam Ondra and Jessica Pilz or Janja Garnbret on the wall, who do you focus on? Where do you put your cameras? Which story do you tell? We want to tell both stories at the same level at the same time. For our work in terms of scheduling for the bouldering finals we switched so for one workup we had women and men and for the one next it was a men and women. And on these, we are really, really strong. And we want to keep this value. Because the more we face the other sports, the more you hear different prize money, different prime shots in the schedule. We are very strong to not get that bad side of the others but to show our good and hopefully, they will take it from us.

Heiko: I would just like to add a sentence about what Adam said before. That's exactly what I meant with the sensitiveness we need during the next years and I think that's the most important. Getting feedback is good, but for my personal opinion, we don't need to change anything in lead, for example, because it's stunning, it's perfect and at the end it's really about the route setting. We hear this a couple of times it's important to have tops, but if you, for example, did not topout semi-final routes, someone will steal your chance to win. Especially if the final is too easy and that's not the main philosophy of our sport, which would be not good.

John: Francis, did you have anything to add there?

Francis: Oh, yeah. I think to Matt's question, I think it's really important this notion of, translating the event to the average consumer who are watching television. I don't think we're there yet actually. I think we need to do a better job, and I think what that means is we need to maybe coordinate better between the route setters, what they intended a route to be like, how they intend the moves to happen. Maybe a little bit of talking about what they think is going on in the climber's mind as to why they're making those decisions on a problem or something and explaining that to the audience. I know that there's a simplicity but that's simplicity of bouldering. It has a lot of complexity in the athlete. And I think we need to, like, find more sophisticated ways of talking about the whole package. Like, what the athlete's strengths are, what that problem entails, what type of strength does that problem entail, why is that athlete not meeting that?

Of course, it's really hard because, you know, like in American sports broadcasting, there's half of a broadcast is like unpacking what's happening. Like this is why the coach did that and they never said it, but you know, what the commentators doing that. And I think we have a long place to go in terms of that in terms of making it ready because it is really complex and to just make it like high drama or like the spectacle of it, right? You know, the kind of parkour and it's like amazing and that's true. But sometimes the most amazing things are not

like high flying triple dinos and stuff. Sometimes most amazing stuff is basically, you know, why they turned that into an under cling and how they thought about it, figuring out a crack sequence when no one else could.

Adam: In general, I think route setters are thinking the more dynamic coordination kind of problems, especially in boulder problems, are the most fantastic to watch but it doesn't really have to be like that.

Francis: It doesn't. Yeah.

Adam: Sometimes, like, you see climbers like giving 10 tries in two minutes and it seems like they don't stick the feet from the ground and then they would suddenly do it. People think that, like, just taking small holes and overhang and might be boring, but I don't know. I think there should be complexity within each round. There should be sets of four different boulders. And that's also I think the most fair to determine who is the winner.

John: So I'd like to move this along here. We've got one more round of questions for the group. I'd like to start with Heiko. Going from here as a coach, maybe more than any other role, but certainly as your role of the CEO of the Climbing Federation, what are your hopes for Tokyo moving forward and what are your next steps, preparations, challenges and things like that as we put Innsbruck behind us?

Heiko: So first of all, the last two years have not been very easy especially for our federation because of on the one hand our protagonists like Jakob Schubert, Jessica Pilz, and the whole team, they have two dreams: To focus on the World Championship here in Innsbruck, they would like to perform in their senior discipline at its best. We were very lucky that that happened but at the same time they needed to start to prepare for Tokyo 2020. And so far, okay, now it's time to focus on and to do some changes in training. It's like Adam said, you have to if you want to. And the biggest question for me so far, how much will it affect your main discipline? Training, probably a lot of speed or doing more in bouldering, how does it affect in lead and vice versa? This could be really interesting because losing potential in your best discipline will mean probably you're not fighting for the medals.

That's what we see at the moment if you have first place that helps really a lot and being on top. In perspective of the federation, I definitely can say that the funding rates raise increased really well. So we can support our athletes even more, and we do have a good support for our athletes but it's even more for example in Austria we have now eight climbers who join in the army. They are like employees of the army, but they can just do the sport. And also we can plan individual programs for training and all around it. So that helps a lot. But on the other hand it is a lot of responsibility and a lot of work and at the end also pressure.

John: Jérôme, I guess for me, looking at climbing becoming an Olympic sport, does that mean all of a sudden for the IFSC that all of a sudden you'll have more sponsors, partners?

Jérôme: Not all of a sudden.

John: Is that going to be one of your jobs moving forward to talk to potential sponsors, raise more money?

Jérôme: So it's not necessarily my job because this is mostly the job of the communication department inside the IFSC. But yes, that is an essential part of our job simply because we need funding and with funding we can develop new projects. Now in terms of what falls on us now, you always still need to show the value of the sport. The interest of your product when you are sponsoring. So it's not because then you got the Olympic stamp and then its ok – I'm in. And if things happen then we should be careful because if people should come onboard and probably the IOC the Olympic movement is coming onboard for this because they see it is built on a sustainable matter and it adds value. So all the partners from media, the sponsors should come for the same reason. And they should come as whole knowing that with these new resources we will discuss all together on how to grow the sport. It's not just ok the IFSC decides. I come to the IFSC and then you guys do what I want. So we want all to be at the table. That's the plan.

John: And are you talking mostly that it's endemic partners to the sport or would you open it up to say Coca-Cola to be a supporter?

Jérôme: No, there's no endemic partners which we're speaking with. You have probably noticed that the IFSC is sponsored by Japan Alliance. So that's the first major one. And there's some additional talks which is good news because again, this would be new resources into the sport for us making your job. Now, one thing is sure, that because we need to be clear that these companies, they don't have the same resources as you are a brand. So what I always say is that we should always have a seat around the table for the plans of the community. Otherwise, there's no point. At some point we're going to build our own with some brands that are not - so we should be careful of having a place for the brands, not necessarily in terms of pure sponsoring but at least making sure that you guys are competent of the Olympics planning community while still talking with the non-endemic and rest of the World because that's what we want to do also. We want to show our sport to the rest of the World.

John: And Sylvia, you're moving ahead now. It seems like you have a lot of challenges that you're facing. Just talking about the format and regulations and whatnot. Tell us a little bit of that, you know, you're concerns for moving forward.

Sylvia: Yeah. So my role at the IFSC is to connect what is happening at events like World Championship here and what is going to happen in the Olympics and keep the best of that into our World Cups which is a slightly different setting and keep and make sure those values are there. So we had really been working hard high to support national federations and the organizers of our events, in order to keep on improving together and to drive and to go through this path together. So when I mentioned that I manage technical commissions, those are made out of our national federation members. So my role is really to keep the entire community of national federations. We have 90 members and to keep them all connected. Obviously, you go from Austria Climbing and some of very big national federation like you to ones in development to very tiny ones. We want to share and just to make sure that everyone is at the same level.

John: Francis, you mentioned to me in a conversation that the media's responsibility – Jérôme, talked about the triangle, the brand, the athlete, the organizers, whatnot – and you mentioned the media is just there to hover and report. At what point is it your responsibility to come forward with a real serious stand one way or the other as we move forward? All these growth numbers coming in the sport, the Olympics happening, whatnot.

Francis: I mean, being in the media, the media isn't one thing, and we don't have like a mission statement, you know, like Gym Climber, Rock & Ice will not have a mission statement as to how these things need to be covered or how the Olympics need to be covered. It's kind of a package deal. There's a lot of different types of stories I think, but what I meant by hovering is just classically remaining a little critical of things at times when other people need to stand up and embrace. Like one example of that would be, you know, growing for the sake of growth, in my opinion, isn't always a good thing. Just to grow. Right? And so the way I conceive sport – and I think we talk a lot about sport growing – I don't think sports can grow. I think businesses and institutions can grow, but sport to me is something you do. Like, it's literally the most basic thing of chalking up and moving. It's a practice. And so there's no shareholders in sport, you know, I think we just conceive it differently.

And so I think when we talk about climbing increasing its numbers that's what we mean. And I think if we encourage climbing to increase its numbers, then we just have to make sure that climbing is benefiting, right? Who benefits from that? There's an increase in numbers that to me as, you know, being a journalist and thinking about these things a lot is who's benefiting from this growth and just making sure that it's the industry, the climbers and the athletes that get to read most of these benefits. The final thing is, of course, crags. It's important to make sure our outdoor places are not getting trampled. That's so huge in the United States. We're lucky to have a lot of good organizations that constantly purchase huge tracks of land for climbers and a lot of climbers, you know, they donate and then you know, they purchase land and take care of it. And so that's like the stewardship is huge. Adam's concern earlier is like all of our concern, right? It's like what's going to happen? But I think people also say that you know, it's going to be gym climbing that's going to increase the number. That's not that correct because you need to get to the crag as well, you know, from the gym. And you know, digital online guidebooks and all this stuff are really what I think bringing a lot of people outside as well. It's not just the fact that they're climbing, but it's the fact that they're getting their hands held or maybe a little too easily in terms of figuring it out you how to go outdoors and stuff. So there's a lot of steps involved. And so, you know, again, just my role is to see complexity in things and not dumbing things down and trying to look deeper. I think that's just what writers need to do and continue doing more.

John: This question goes to all the other media folks out there too. Is there something that you'd like to add about the responsibility of the media to the growth of the sport?

Kevin Corrigan (Climbing Magazine, USA): I will say something. I think I would kind of look at it in two ways. In one hand we have a responsibility to report on what's going on accurately. But then talking about like “If the Olympics is good or bad” or what's going to happen. Instead of taking a position, I look at it more as just providing voices to rational arguments from people that have those opinions. So I don't think we naturally necessarily should be taking a stand, just allowing people to make arguments either way if they're smart opinions.

Participant 2: Sorry, another part of the media and just following on what you assigned. I think there is an onus on the media and an importance for the people of the media not to just be trying to grow their own brand through being divisive or confrontational and saying, for instance, “A little of this horrible combined is going to kill climbing blah, blah.” Just see if you can get more dramatized reading and you almost become like this sort of the trump of the media wall. Well, maybe you can grow your own brand, but look at how many people are reading and

how many people are looking at what I'm doing. I think there is a responsibility ethically on the media too. We can have an opinion, but we have to present it materially and we have to look at all the statements. I think that's an important thing.

Kevin Corrigan (Climbing Magazine, USA): To elaborate on what you just said. There's a really smart essay, called "The Braindead Megaphone" that I think a lot about in regards to these things with the overall point of it being this metaphor where if you're at a party and some loud idiot comes in and starts yelling and messing everything up, everyone's going to start talking about that person. So it's basically just by being there, he has changed the conversation. I think thinking about that in terms of the media is what we report on no matter what our opinion is, what we're saying about it changes the conversation overall. So we have to be thinking about is what we're reporting on worth mentioning in the first place. Does that make sense?

John: Very much so, thank you for the comment. Adam, I just like to ask you, as a professional climber, what do you think your role is here in all this moving forward as the sport grows? And maybe not just you, but your colleagues and fellow climbers, competition climbers.

Adam: I think in terms of like the Olympic movement, there should be a lot more collaboration. Collaboration between IFSC, athletes, and the route setters. Right now, it seems to me that IFSC thinks one thing develop a room which maybe nor route setters, nor athletes are very happy with it. The route-setters, they might be setting in a certain way thinking that is the best for the competitions. There should be maybe more feedback from the audience, from the athletes. I think that is very important. Besides my responsibility of just maybe presenting my opinions about how the whole climbing as a complex should be. And that is that there is a gym climbing, there's a competition climbing, but then there is the world outdoors which should not be really effected by what is going on in the gym climbing. So that's what I said, diversity of the climbing and just really saying that this crag will be bolted in this style or kept as a traditional climbing, and this crag, okay, let's make it safe and bolt it safely and stuff like this.

Participant 1: Can I add a question for Adam? Just because we spoke a lot about a combined format in the Olympics but also its first time in a World Championship. You were in the middle now, you have a speed and one more day for combined. This is your 6th World Championship I think. So how did this change or how the combined change for you as athlete? Not only about training but...

Adam: For me, it's much easier now to fully concentrate on the single disciplines. So at the beginning of the World Championships, there was only lead and I was only focused on that. Right now its bouldering and I'm only focused on bouldering. I don't really get distracted by the idea that one day later they're is the combined.

Participant 1: Okay. It's no problem for say leads, speed, bouldering is...

Adam: Well, let's say I wasn't really focused on speed at all. I didn't really want to get even stressed about it. So I went and I showed my best but I wasn't really stressed about it. I wasn't really -- it was no pressure to perform my best in speed and it was not really determining whether I would make it to the top up six and combined or not.

Participant 1: Is the mentality getting more important at World Championships this time at this sport...

Adam: For sure, your mental game is the most important thing in the World Championships because like that's the events of the year or of the two years and everybody wants to show their best. We are all physically well prepared, but then it really comes down to who is really able to perform under the pressure.

Participant 1: But it's getting more important now you think? With combined you have to get every day new focus or second day maybe...

Adam: I think for most of the leads is even more difficult to perform under the pressure because of the combined format. I think I can really kind of like the pressure of the combine that I want to do well in speed and lead and boulder because they're also combined that I want to make it up to six, I can kind of like turn down to pressure from this.

John: Kolin, to end on you from the brand, the mission of Black Diamond is to make the best climbing equipment in the world. How do you balance it all out here as we move forward? We're making all these great products, and certainly, we've added categories, say Gym Climbing being one of them, but as we add these products, we add more people to this sport and we add more people out to the crags themselves. What is the brand Black Diamond doing to address this moving forward? I guess specifically to the crowds that we're seeing out at the crags, safety standards and whatnot.

Kolin: Yeah. I mean, that's definitely a concern and a lot of people touched on it here today. So ultimately we just want to make climbing gear so you can go climbing. Nothing has changed. At the end of the day, the gym growing, the Olympics, all that, I think it will end up pushing some climbers outside, for sure. I don't think you're going to see a balanced growth because a lot of these gyms are in metropolitan areas where there's not even any climbing around at all. But some of these gym climbers will go outside. So what BD has to do or what we are doing to sum it up, is basically trying to educate these people. We're making gear. We need to make the gear, I don't want to say safer, because frankly, there's nothing safe about climbing. The second you leave the ground, you're in a dangerous situation. You could get killed just from a couple of feet. So we need to make the gear that is safe enough for these folks, but we need to educate these people how to use it. And that's one of my personal fears, coming from the quality background of having all these uneducated climbers that are seeing it on TV or going in the gym and then taking it outside and not knowing what's going on.

I had been out at a really popular outdoor crag where some young – this is a true story – some young gym climbers came up and they looked at the wall and they didn't know that they had to bring quickdraws. Like they thought all the quickdraws were always everywhere because in the gym the quickdraws are always there. So they couldn't climb because they didn't have any quickdraws. So it's an important matter and it's not just on the manufacturers, it's on everyone trying to educate these people because climbing is dangerous and we don't want to have anybody get hurt out there. So that is one aspect that I think is on all of us.

The next is about the environment. Because some of these climbers will go outside and they're not educated on how to treat the outdoors. Black Diamond historically has really strong stands on trying to preserve the access to the climbing areas in the United States and we focus a lot in Europe over the last several years as well. So I think that again, everyone needs to do their part to educate these new climbers so when they go outside, they know how to keep the crags clean, they know if certain areas are closed to not go there. They know how to bolt

properly if they're bolting. And then most importantly, they know how to actually climb safely without hurting themselves or anybody else.

John: Thank you. At this point, we've kept you longer already than we had thought. So I want to just certainly thank the panel here very much for coming and taking some time just to talk about these issues, these point of views and certainly with the audience as well. So we thank you very much. We would like to open this up to the audience at this point if there are any remaining questions and then we're going to do, a light brunch in the Black Diamond's showroom and if you had other questions that you want to direct personally, you're more than welcome to. But I would like to move towards wrapping this up because we're past your time. If there's any remaining questions here that you'd like to ask, by all means.

Brandon Pullan (Gripped Magazine, CA): How fast do you think speed climbing is going to go?

Heiko: Probably if the route changes.

Brandon Pullan (Gripped Magazine, CA): Do you think there is a chance for that, the route changing?

Sylvia: I can answer. So there are some discussions with the athletes. They've asked if we could do maybe a 40-year circle once we're in the Olympics so we change route. The one we have is quite good. For a number of reasons, it matches techniques and dynamic in a sequence, but definitely, it's something we're considering.

Francis: Yeah. It took like 100 years for the 100-meter sprint to go down a second. And like over the last 100 years, Usain Bolt beat an over 100-year-old record by just like a little over a second. So are we going to see a major decline in speed? I don't think so. I just think. I mean there is going to be limits and people are gonna hit those limits. I mean, I think we'll chip away at it. Adam will have a better perspective as to how that will be done, but I mean historically speaking, you know, those plateaus, they're just inevitable in sport. You know...

Adam: It's interesting. I think a very recent thing that someone found a new sequence skipping like the forth hold on the left side and like putting your left foot next to your hands, that I think fits much more to the boulders because that sequence is properly hard. I think it's like 7a on a boulder problem by itself. But it is faster. But it might not be the best for like the real speed specialist. But I already heard that some of them, they tried it then they could do pretty well, but they didn't really use it for this competition because they don't find it too low percentage. I think that could really influence a lot the future world record figure.

John: Great. Well, we will conclude there. Thanks again for joining this POV.

Christian: Also, from my side, thanks for attending this panel, and to sum it up a little bit, I think we are in the middle of the Road to Tokyo and I think that was hopefully a kick off point where we've heard some comments and some information. To sum it up, I think it would be great to have more of this kind of conversations. That was ultimately the goal to bring different stakeholders from the sport together to work together on our future, not only the athletes on its own and the brands on its own. And I'm happy that you all have been here.